

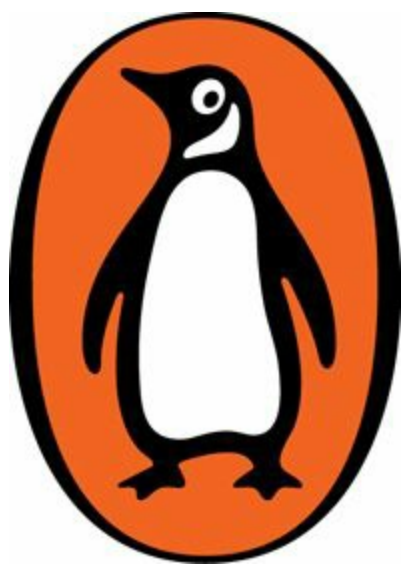
In the Bazaar of Love



The Selected Poetry
of

Amir Khusrau

Translated by
PAUL LOSENSKY & SUNIL SHARMA



THE SELECTED POETRY OF AMĪR KHUSRAU

IN THE BAZAAR OF LOVE

Translated and introduced by
PAUL E. LOSENSKY and SUNIL SHARMA



Contents

[About the Author](#)

[Praise for the Book](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Ghazals](#)

[Translated by Paul E. Losensky](#)

[Other Poems](#)

[Translated by Sunil Sharma](#)

[Miscellaneous Persian Poems](#)

[Macaronic and Short Persian Poems](#)

[Hindavi Poems](#)

[Narrative Poems](#)

[Footnotes](#)

[Other Poems](#)

[Bibliography](#)

[Selected Glossary](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

[Copyright](#)

IN THE BAZAAR OF LOVE

Paul E. Losensky is associate professor at Indiana University, Bloomington, where he teaches translation studies, and Persian language and literature.

Sunil Sharma teaches Persian and Indian literatures at Boston University. He is the author of two books on Indo-Persian poetry.

Praise for the Book

‘[It] is a veritable treasure trove of the most beautiful lines composed by the “Parrot of India”, so called because of his fluency and eloquence in Persian . . . And here you will find lines that come significantly close to the original in beauty’—*Financial Chronicle*

‘We all should read this book, first as a book of elegant poetry and then as a commentary on the infinitely diverse and multi-hued Indian culture’—*The Hindu*

‘The translators do offer us as thorough a summary as possible within the scope of an Introduction of the external political events and affiliations that made up Khusrau’s career in the service of five rulers in Delhi. They also offer the reader unfamiliar with the titles of Khusrau’s works an introduction to these works, setting each into a particular moment in his career. Among the other merits of this book is that its selection of poems contains representatives of every poetic genre—from panegyric to ghazal, Hindi riddle and masnavi (a genre of Persian narrative poem in rhymed couplets)—in which Khusrau wrote . . . Readers should expect meticulously correct translations of poetry whose originals revel in varieties of word play and are thus often nearly untranslatable. Were it not for this venture, those of Khusrau’s English-reading admirers who don’t know Persian or Hindi, or both, would be deprived of the rare correctness these translations provide’—*Biblio*

‘From time to time, we glimpse beauty and intensity . . .’—*Asian Age*

*man bi-dān nazram ki gar miram bi-sūyam bin-garī
bīn kih chu man chand kas murda-st dar bāzār-i ‘ishq*

*I vow to die
that you might look my way.
See how many have died like me
in the bazaar of love.*

Introduction

Amīr Khusrau (1253–1325)—often also written as Khusraw or Khusro—was one of the greatest poets of medieval India, writing in both Persian, the courtly language of Muslims of the sultanate period, and Hindavi, the vernacular language of the Delhi area. Known as *Tūtī-yi Hind* (Parrot of India) for his poetic eloquence and fluency in Persian, Amīr Khusrau has stood as a major cultural icon in the history of Indian civilization for almost seven hundred years. He is especially remembered as the founder of the ‘Ganga–Jamni’ Hindustani culture which is a synthesis of Muslim and Hindu elements. He helped to give a distinctive character to Indian Islamic cultural traditions through his contributions to the fields of Indian classical music, Islamic mysticism (Sufism), South Asian Sufi music (*qawwālī*), and Persian literature. Significantly, he also contributed to the development of Hindavi, in which both modern Hindi and Urdu have their roots. Positioned at the juncture of two cultures, Amīr Khusrau’s prodigious talents and prolific literary output make him one of the outstanding figures in Islamic, Indian, and indeed world cultural history.

Amīr Khusrau’s legacy is far more widespread than people realize, from his vast corpus of Persian poetry that continues to be read in the modern Persian-speaking world (Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan) to this day, to the devotional *qawwālīs* that are performed and listened to in India, Pakistan, and beyond. He is rightly acknowledged as the best Indian poet to have written in Persian, and his influence on later Persian and Urdu literature was immense. In South Asia, he is revered for his contributions to music and mysticism but most people are familiar with only a small portion of his immense body of poetry and prose in Persian, or have no access to these works due to the language barrier. This has not been Amīr Khusrau’s fate alone. The Persianate world in which he lived, the entire area from Anatolia (now Turkey) to India, no longer exists as a cultural continuum. Though the ruling elite of these lands was mainly Turkish by ethnicity, the language of high culture was Persian, with Arabic serving as the sacred language of religion. But Persian ceased to be a language of learning in the Indian subcontinent during the British colonial period, and with the fragmentation of the Persianate world by the forces of modern nationalism, many poets who form part of the Indian Persian heritage have suffered a similar fate, including the nineteenth-century Ghālib, who wrote prodigiously in Persian as well as in Urdu. However, Amīr Khusrau’s Hindavi poetry and Persian poetry on Sufi themes are still part of a living and dynamic tradition.

Amīr Khusrau’s personality is shrouded in mystery and attempts to piece together his biography can be frustrating. Modern biographers have difficulty resolving the apparent conflict between his professional life as a courtier and his spiritual life as a mystic. As a courtier Khusrau would have had to overlook many morally dubious actions and practices on the part of his patrons, for which he must have suffered some ethical conflict. Furthermore, while tradition credits Khusrau with a body of Hindavi poetry and the invention of several musical instruments, there is no written, documentary evidence to support this claim. Fortunately for us, there is quite a bit of biographical information in Amīr Khusrau’s own writings and in numerous poetic and Sufi biographical narratives from throughout the medieval period. Although the information is not always reliable and the resulting picture of the poet seems one-dimensional or larger than life, it is more than we have for most other

pre-modern poets. Getting to the ‘real’ Amīr Khusrau challenges us to sort through an overwhelming number and variety of original sources, many unpublished, and to unravel the layers of cultural myth and legend that have shrouded his personality over the centuries.

There are some remarkable parallels between Amīr Khusrau’s life and that of the renowned Sufi poet, Jalāluddīn Rūmī (d. 1273), who lived a generation or two before him. As a result of the Mongol incursion into Central Asia Rūmī fled westwards with his family and ended up in Konya, in what is now Turkey. Similarly, a couple of decades later, Khusrau’s family moved eastwards and ended up in India. Both poets had their origins in the region of Balkh in present-day Afghanistan. There are some salient differences in their biographies: Khusrau was born in India, to a Turkish father and Indian mother, and identified himself as an Indian; Rūmī, ethnically Iranian, was born near Balkh, far from Konya, the city where he was to settle. Also, Khusrau was deeply involved in court life, and most of his Persian writing, whether poetry or prose, is of a panegyric or historical nature, whereas Rūmī was not a court poet and his output is entirely mystical. Thus, it is appropriate that Khusrau is honoured with the title *Amīr* (Prince) and Rūmī with *Maulānā* (Our Master). Nevertheless, just as Rūmī had a deep attachment to his spiritual companion Shams, Khusrau was devoted to Nizāmuddīn Auliya. In poem 35 in our collection, Khusrau uses Rūmī’s characteristic closing signature ‘Silence’, as he rues his failure to turn fully to a life of religious devotion. Most importantly, both were poets of Central Asian origin who deeply influenced the practice of Sufism in their respective parts of the world through their emphasis on the mystical performance of music and dance, and the poetic language in which it was expressed. Both were immersed in the local cultures and wrote macaronic poetry, mixing Persian with local languages (Persian, Turkish, Greek and Arabic in Rūmī’s case; Persian and Hindavi in Amīr Khusrau’s). Since both chose to write their poetry in Persian and authored a large body of *ghazals* on themes of love, there are many points of comparison from a literary point of view as well, although one must be sensitive to the different historical and social contexts in which they were active as poets.

AMĪR KHUSRAU’S LIFE

Although Amīr Khusrau included much autobiographical information in his writings, the details of his origins are not clear. His father was Sayfuddīn Shamsī, whose Turkish name was Lāchīn, perhaps named after the obscure Lāchīn tribe from the region of Transoxiana in Central Asia, from where many people migrated to north India in the wake of the Mongol invasions. At least one scholar has suggested that Shamsī may have been of slave origins and named after his first master. In Delhi he served Sultan Iltutmish (r. 1211–36) in the police force of the city. It was not uncommon for Turkish slaves to attain high positions at the courts of rulers all over the Islamic world. Over time, as Khusrau’s prestige and fame as a mystic increased, the writers chronicling his life creatively embellished this account of the origins of his family.

Sayfuddīn Shamsī married the daughter of ‘Imād al-Mulk, an Indian Muslim who was also in the service of the sultan, first as the keeper of the royal falcon and later of the royal horse. Although the first- and second-generation Turkish immigrants were generally an elite group who looked down on recently converted Indian Muslims, it appears that intermarriage did take place between the two communities. Khusrau was proud of both sides of his lineage and his life and writings symbolize a synthesis of the two different cultures. Thus, Khusrau appropriately calls himself an ‘Indian Turk’ (in India the designation ‘Turk’ came to be synonymous with ‘Muslim’) and his Sufi master Nizāmuddīn Auliya called him the ‘Turk of God’.

Sayfuddīn Shamsī had three sons, and our poet Abū al-Hasan ‘Khusrau’ was born in 1253 in Delhi

and was most certainly the second of the male offspring. His brother ‘Izzuddīn ‘Alī Shāh went on to become a scholar of Arabic and Persian, while the other brother, Husāmuddīn Qutlugh became a professional soldier like their father. The report of a later biographer that Amīr Khusrau’s birthplace was the village Patiyali (Etah district, UP), although now accepted as a fact, is not confirmed in the poet’s own writings. It is true that the poet did spend some years there while serving in the military, but Khusrau’s statements regarding his intense attachment to the capital city suggest that Delhi may indeed have been his birthplace.

Although Khusrau’s father was illiterate he made sure that his sons received a proper education. He died in battle when the poet was eight, and as a result, the boys were raised by their maternal uncles and maternal grandfather, a powerful nobleman in service at court for over eighty years. Khusrau writes with great fondness about his grandfather who was the most influential figure in his life during his formative years. Even before he reached his teens Khusrau started to compose poetry in Persian. His talent did not go unnoticed by his elders and he passed a poetic test with flying colours. This was the time when the poet got his first pen-name (*takhallus*), ‘Sultani’, which he used in his earliest poems. On the question of language, Khusrau would have been educated in Arabic and Persian, perhaps spoken some Turki, and definitely have used Hindavi (the *khadi boli* of the Delhi region) as the language of daily life. However, Persian would be the language of choice for his literary works since it was the court language of the Delhi sultans.

It was at his grandfather’s house that Amīr Khusrau met the young Sufi Nizāmuddīn Auliya, who had just moved to Delhi for his education, and who would later become one of the most renowned spiritual men connected to the city and the most important person in the poet’s life. Khusrau’s other closest intimate was the court poet and fellow Sufi Hasan Sijzī (d. 1337), whose life revolved around the same institutions and personalities as Khusrau’s. Though Hasan and Khusrau were both honoured with the title of *Amīr* for their prowess in the art of poetry, Hasan is today better known for his work *Favā’id al-fu’ād* (Morals of the Heart), in which he recorded the discourses of Nizāmuddīn Auliya.

Khusrau’s career as a professional poet began in earnest when he was twenty, also the time when his grandfather passed away at the age of one hundred and thirteen. Under the mentorship of senior poets at the sultan’s court, Khusrau began composing verses in praise of his patrons. For the next fifty years, until his death in 1325, Khusrau was a courtier and poet, initially in the service of princes and nobles, then permanently at the court of the sultan of Delhi. Serving five rulers and witnessing the rule of several more, he managed to survive the political intrigues of the various factions and individuals at work in Delhi. This in-fighting probably propelled him further into Sufism. Khusrau lived simultaneously in the normally incompatible worlds of the mystic and the courtier. A ruler would often be arbitrary in showing favour to poets and Sufis of the city, and judging by the lives of many medieval Persian poets, the perils of being a panegyrist at court were great.

In medieval Islamic culture, praise poetry was one of the principal means for a ruler to establish and propagate his cultural and political legitimacy. The professional court poet could be richly rewarded for his services, but he was often regarded as a mercenary sycophant because he shifted allegiances without qualms and offered his praises to the highest bidder. Khusrau admits that praising patrons is a tiresome task even if it results in fine poetry. He uses the metaphor of Jesus’s breath, which is supposed to bestow life on the dead: just as it rejuvenates a lamp’s flame, so good poetry erases the negative aspects of insincere praise. Often Khusrau and poets like him state that they utter no lies but only report the truth. Court poets, however, were not objective recorders of the character and deeds of their patrons; rather, they presented an idealized image of the ruler. They were professionals whose livelihood depended on their mastery of current literary trends and the existence

of generous patrons, and they competed with a whole class of wandering poets who were continuously seeking better prospects for themselves. Once a poet became successful and a favourite at court, he could not easily disassociate himself from his patron. The court poet played many roles: he was an entertainer, but also a boon companion (*nadīm*) and friend to the ruler; he was a propagandist, but also an advisor who could use his poetry as a means of instructing his patron in proper conduct.

Amīr Khusrau's first patron was Kishlū Khān (also known as Malik Chhajjū), a nobleman and nephew of Sultan Balban (r. 1266–87). Based in Sunnam, west of Delhi, Malik Chhajjū was celebrated as a generous patron of poets. However, at the end of two years' service, Amīr Khusrau fell out of Malik Chhajjū's favour for accepting a gift from his cousin, the emperor's son Bughrā Khān, who was also a great admirer of Khusrau's poems. As a result, Khusrau took up service with his new patron and settled in Samana (Punjab), but he stayed there only briefly before moving on to Lakhnauti (Bengal) where Bughrā Khān was sent to quell a rebellion. Bughrā Khān was a connoisseur of music and the arts, but the poet soon left his service and returned to Delhi because he missed the city and his family. He often spoke candidly of his deep attachment to the city, which he considered his home. In one of his poems, written when he was absent from Delhi, he says:

My home was the Dome of Islam.
It was the *qibla* for kings of the seven climes.
Delhi is the twin of pure paradise,
a prototype of the heavenly throne on an earthly scroll.

Such statements link his name to the city and helped in building the reputation of the sultanate capital as a major centre of Persian poetry in the Islamic world. Khusrau is often given the added appellation of Dihlavī or Dehlvī (of Delhi).

In 1280, Amīr Khusrau attracted the attention and became the *nadīm* of the sultan's son, the young prince Khān Malik Sultān Muhammad, who was by all accounts a warm, generous and charming individual. Prince Muhammad was fond of poetry and gathered the best poets around him. His court at Multan was a significant cultural centre that rivalled even Delhi for a time. Multan was home to the Suhrawardi Sufi order and Khusrau must have had contacts with the Sufis based there. In all likelihood, he witnessed and participated in performances of devotional singing that would later develop into the *qawwālī*. The memory of the famous Persian mystical poet Fakhruddīn 'Irāqī (d. 1289)—who had lived in Multan for twenty-five years before returning to the western Islamic lands—must have been fresh in the community, and Amīr Khusrau would have heard 'Irāqī's *ghazals* which were also popular with the Chishti Sufis. Khusrau's friend Hasan had also accompanied him to Multan in the service of Prince Muhammad. According to one tradition, Muhammad twice invited the famous poet of Iran, Sa'dī of Shiraz (d. 1292), a literary giant and model for all poets writing in Persian at this time, to come and settle in Multan where the prince was going to name an institution of learning after him. It is even claimed that Sa'dī did visit India to meet Amīr Khusrau but these accounts are not confirmed by any reliable source of the period.

Amīr Khusrau's sojourn in Multan lasted five years and came to an abrupt end in 1285 when Timur Khān Tātār led a Mongol foray into the Punjab. In the ensuing battle, Prince Muhammad was killed and Khusrau taken captive. The poet spent a short time as prisoner, a horrifying experience that he later described in graphic detail. He and Hasan both wrote moving elegies on the death of their beloved patron, and when they returned home, all of Delhi was in mourning for the prince who was henceforth called the Martyr Prince (*Sultān-i shahīd*). The powerful elegy by Amīr Khusrau in eleven

stanzas reveals the depth of his grief:

People shed so many tears in all directions
that five other rivers have appeared in Multan.
I wanted to speak of the fire in my heart
but a hundred fiery tongues flared up in my mouth.

The death of the prince changed the very geography of the poet's world in ways that exceeded all expression. Written in the typical poetic idiom of the *marsīya* (elegy), the poem is a poignant and sincere elegy for the virtuous young patron, and it was said that when the sultan in Delhi heard the poem he was moved to tears. For his part, Hasan wrote his elegy in prose, in order not to compete or be compared with his friend.

After returning to Delhi, Amīr Khusrau kept a low profile, spending time with his family. Scattered references in Khusrau's works testify to his deep and sincere attachment to his family. He mentions his maternal grandfather in fond terms as an influential figure in his early years. His mother, to whom he was especially close, is also mentioned a few times and his elegy on her death in 1299—which occurred the same year that he lost one of his two brothers—speaks of his sense of personal loss. As for other family members, there is no mention of his wife anywhere in his works but there are references to his children. He addresses his daughter Mastūra at the end of his work *Matla' al-anvār*, while in his poem *Hasht bihisht*, he gives advice to another daughter Afīfa. He gives advice to his son Khizr in *Majnūn Lailā*. Two sons, Muhammad and Hājjī, died during the poet's lifetime while another, Malik Ahmad, was known to be active as a court poet under Sultan Fīrūzshāh Tughlaq (r. 1351–75).

The political situation in Delhi was unstable at this time and Khusrau went east to Avadh for a brief stint in the service of the new governor, the freedman 'Alī Sarjāndār Hātim Khān. He returned to Delhi in 1289, and as though to celebrate his return to the city, Khusrau wrote:

Dehli:
Refuge of religion!
Refuge and paradise of justice!
Long may it endure!
Since it is a heavenly paradise
in every essential quality,
may God keep it free from calamity.

This verse appears in the work *Qirān al-sa'dain* (Conjunction of Two Stars) that he was commissioned to write by the new sultan, Kaiqubād (r. 1287–90), to commemorate the reunion between the sultan and his father Bughrā Khān, Khusrau's one-time patron. This work was the first narrative poem on a theme from the history of his own times and an innovative step in his growth as a court poet. Sultan Kaiqubād did not survive long and died the following year at the age of twenty-two in 1290.

One year later, Amīr Khusrau joined the court of the new sultan, Jalāluddīn Khaljī (r. 1290–96), and from then until his death he was continuously connected with the court of Delhi, having progressed from serving provincial officials to being the chief poet at the imperial court. Under Jalāluddīn Khaljī and 'Alāuddīn Khaljī (r. 1296–1316), both of whom were of Afghan background, Khusrau was at his peak as a professional poet. When Sultan Jalāluddīn began his short reign, he was a man of advanced years but had a great zeal for the arts and was an ardent admirer of Amīr

Khusrau's poetry. The contemporary historian Ziyāuddīn Barnī describes the monarch's fondness for Khusrau:

Sultan Jalāluddīn was a connoisseur and patron of the arts. He had an elegant disposition and could compose quatrains and *ghazals*. What clearer proof could there have been of his refined nature and connoisseurship than the fact that just when he had become the war minister he extolled Amīr Khusrau, who was the chief of the court poets from first to last, and held him in great esteem ... and fixed upon him a stipend of 1200 *tankas* which had been his father's, and gave him horses, vestments and his own slaves. When he became king, Amīr Khusrau became one of his intimates at court and served as keeper of the Qur'ān.

In the pleasure assemblies (*mahfil*), there was a great deal of drinking, jesting and exchange of poetry, accompanied by music, singing and dancing by women and young boys who would also serve wine. In fact, the figure of the *sāqī* or cupbearer is a stock character in Khusrau's *ghazals*. These assemblies provide the implied setting for much of his lyric poetry, and Barnī states, 'Amīr Khusrau would bring new *ghazals* daily to those assemblies and the sultan became enamoured of his poems and rewarded him handsomely.' The reign of 'Alāuddīn Khaljī, Jalāluddīn's nephew and successor, witnessed a cultural renaissance, exceeding even the standards of other Delhi sultans for patronage of literature and the arts. Architecture and building activities flourished and all sorts of historical, poetic and scientific works were written in Persian.

In the last decade of his life, Amīr Khusrau served the new sultan, Mubārak Shāh (r. 1316–20), the young and handsome son of 'Alāuddīn Khaljī, who had come to the throne as the result of a bloody coup. Mubārak Shāh was not well disposed towards Nizāmuddīn Auliya because his brother Khizr Khān, whom he had killed in his bid for the throne, had been a disciple of the *pīr*. This must have been the cause of some tension between the sultan and Khusrau, but since the latter was a senior and established poet by this time, he probably was able to maintain a neutral ground. What followed was a particularly turbulent period of history, and it must have taken all of Khusrau's diplomatic skills and spiritual fortitude to maintain a presence at court and celebrate the deeds of his patrons. The promising young monarch Mubārak Shāh had become slavishly attached to his male lover, Khusrau Khān, a recent convert to Islam who eventually usurped the throne after having had Mubārak Shāh murdered. A few months later, the usurper was removed by Ghiyāsuddīn Tughlaq (r. 1320–25). The events of this period have all the drama, debauchery and violence of ancient Rome in its period of decline, and it was up to the poet to spin all this into an epic. Sultan Ghiyāsuddīn was a pious and orthodox individual who looked askance at the musical gatherings at the *khānaqāh* of Nizāmuddīn Auliya. Khusrau's last patron was Muhammad Shāh (r. 1325–51), the son and successor of Ghiyāsuddīn.

Nizāmuddīn Auliya passed away in 1325 while Amīr Khusrau was with the sultan on a military campaign in the east. It is said that when he heard the news about his *pīr*'s death, he recited the following couplet in Hindavi (see [poem 73](#)) that has become a core part of the *qawwālīs*' repertoire:

gorī sove sej par mukh par dāre kes
chal Khusrau ghar apne sānjh bhain sau des

Amīr Khusrau himself died a few months later in Delhi and was buried near Nizāmuddīn Auliya's grave. His tomb, which dates from the Mughal period, has been added to and decorated at various times over the centuries. The site is a place of pilgrimage and gatherings for devout pilgrims and Sufis. The 'urs or death anniversaries of Nizāmuddīn Auliya (18 Rabī' al-sānī) and Amīr Khusrau (17 Shawwāl) are both occasions on which Sufis from all over South Asia come together.

Communities of Muslims were already established in India in the early years of Islam, primarily in the trading communities on the Malabar coast and in the regions of Sindh and Gujarat. It was the conquest of northern India by Sultan Mahmūd of Ghazni (d. 1030), the ruler of a vast empire, that brought about the inclusion of India in the world of Islam. Although Turkish-speaking, the Ghaznavids were the cultural and political heirs of the earlier Persian dynasty of the Samanids in Bukhara. The Samanids had established themselves in the early ninth century and their institutions and courtly culture had a Persian orientation, as was true of the eastern Islamic world in general. As the Turks of Central Asia converted to Islam and served as slaves in the courts and armies of the Muslim rulers, they in turn became empowered and founded new dynasties.

By the latter part of the eleventh century, the rule of the Ghaznavids had been established in north-western India, and it became a thriving cultural centre. At this time, Lahore was home to court poets such as Abū al-Faraj Rūnī (d. ca 1102) and Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān (d. 1121), and the Sufi Shaikh Hujvīrī 'Dātā Ganj Bakhsh' (d. 1071), who wrote the first Persian Sufi manual, *Kashf al-mahjūb* (Unveiling of the Veiled), and whose shrine in the city is a centre for mystics and pilgrims to this day. The Ghaznavids increasingly turned eastwards as they lost their Iranian possessions to another Turkish dynasty, the Seljuqs, but even here they eventually lost out to a ruling house known as the Ghurids, based in Ghur, in the hilly regions of western Afghanistan. As successors to the Ghaznavids, the Ghurids shifted the centres of power and culture closer to the Indian heartlands and away from the frontier, to the cities of Uchh, Multan and Delhi.

At the Battle of Tarain under the leadership of Mu'izzuddīn Muhammad, the Ghurids won a decisive victory over the Hindu rulers, the Chauhans, and the Turkish slave Qutbuddīn Aibek was appointed as deputy in Delhi, which became the seat of a new polity. In the next few decades, Muslims began to consolidate their power under the rule of sultans such as Iltutmish, who was succeeded by his formidable daughter, Raziya (r. 1236–40), one of the few women rulers in medieval Islam, Nāsiruddīn (r. 1246–66) and Balban (r. 1266–87). These rulers of slave origin were followed by the Khaljī and Tughlaq dynasties whose rule lasted until the fourteenth century.

Meanwhile, the Mongol invasion of Central Asia and Iran in the early thirteenth century led many scholars, poets, artisans and religious figures to migrate to India and settle in and around Delhi, since as a place of refuge it had come to be known as the Dome of Islam (*qubbat al-Islām*). These émigrés brought their skills, institutions and religious and literary traditions with them, and as these came into contact with local cultural practices a uniquely Indian form of Islamic civilization was born. Thirteenth-century Delhi was an amalgamation of several cities whose traces have not completely disappeared from the city's topography. Its foundations were laid near the Hindu citadel of Lalkot, in the present-day area of Mehrauli, and soon the villages of Kilokhri, Siri (modern-day Shahpur), Ghiyaspur, Jahanpanah, were all integrated into this thriving metropolis. The architectural monuments built over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, such as the tombs of the early rulers, the victory tower Qutb Minār, Qubbat al-Islām Mosque, the water reservoirs Hauz Shamsī and the Hauz Khās, and the city of Tughlaqābād, attest to the existence of powerful and centralized ruling houses that were conscious of the city's unique position in the world of Islam and South Asia.

By the time of Amīr Khusrau's birth in 1253, in half a century under a succession of Turkish rulers, Delhi had become a cosmopolitan city renowned throughout the Islamic world for its institutions of learning and as a haven for wandering scholars and poets. In the early days of the slave rulers, the city was administered by an elite corps of Turkish nobles known as the *chihilgān* (The Forty) whose

power declined over time as Indians began to participate in the government. The indigenous population consisted chiefly of Hindus, Jains, and two broad categories of Muslims: Indian converts and immigrants from Central Asia who had settled there as refugees or were attracted by the centres of learning, such as the Mu‘izzī *madrasa*, and by the generous patronage of the rulers. Such institutions also attracted Sufis, and Delhi’s thriving markets brought in merchants and traders. The Moroccan traveller Ibn Battūta reached Delhi in 1333, a few years after Amīr Khusrau’s death, and describes the society in great detail. According to him Delhi was the metropolis of India that combined beauty with strength, even calling it the largest city in the eastern Muslim world.

Despite its rapid rise to prominence, the capital city of the sultanate was beset with political upheavals and instability throughout the thirteenth century, due, on the one hand, to the repeated Mongol raids in the north-west (sometimes right into the environs of Delhi), and on the other, to the ruthless battles of succession for the throne and the years of short-lived and unstable rule of usurpers. Nevertheless, there were prolonged periods of stability during which many artistic and cultural endeavours were undertaken and creative energies allowed to flower, as the surviving architectural and literary monuments testify.

Arabic was the language of the religious sciences and technical disciplines, while Persian was more widely used both in speech and writing. Persian was the literary and cultural language of the eastern Islamic world and of a cosmopolitan literary world that at this time extended from Anatolia and the Caucasus to Bengal. The Samanid and Ghaznavids had been the earliest patrons of Persian court literature, and even though the Ghaznavid sultan, Mahmūd, and some of the Muslim rulers of India were of Turkish origin, Turkish never became a literary language in India, nor did it receive courtly patronage. Hindavi was the language of the people around Delhi, but being in a formative stage it still had not achieved high cultural status. Its development into a full-fledged literary medium was the result of the impetus given by poets like Khusrau and the Sufis who had more direct contact with the populace.

In the history of the spread of Islam in the Indian subcontinent, the role of the Sufis cannot be overestimated. It was due to the tireless efforts of these mystics who wandered off into every corner of the land and made contact with people at all levels of society that Islam became part of the local religious landscape. It was also due to the medieval Sufis and Hindu mystics of the *bhakti* movement that vernacular languages came into their own and took their place next to the more prestigious languages of India, Persian and Sanskrit. There were two primary Sufi orders (*silsila*) in India at this time and they varied fundamentally in their practices as well as their relationship to the state and to the populace. Originating in Iraq, the Suhrawardi Sufi order was established in Multan, on the western frontier of the Delhi sultanate, in the thirteenth century by Shaikh Bahāuddīn Zakariyā; it was about the same time that the Chishti order became prominent in the capital city. The Chishti presence in Delhi dated from the time of the visit of the great master Shaikh Mu‘īnuddīn Chishtī, who came there in 1193 but moved on to Ajmer (Rajasthan) in the heart of the Hindu dominions, and his disciple Qutbuddīn Bakhtiyār Kākī, who settled in Delhi, where his tomb is situated. The towering figure among them and the most influential *pīr* (spiritual leader) was Nizāmuddīn Auliya, who had inherited the leadership (*khilāfat*) of the order from Shaikh Farīuddīn in 1266.

No study of the social or literary history of the times can ignore the presence of Nizāmuddīn Auliya in the city and his influence on the lives of so many of his contemporaries. By all accounts, he had a charismatic personality and led a life steadfastly devoted to providing for the spiritual needs of his community. Although the Chishtis preferred to have nothing to do with the sultan and his court in Delhi, they had an influence on the populace, and this created tensions with both the ruling powers

and the religious clergy (*‘ulamā*), neither of whom were favourably disposed to this order. The Suhrawardis, for their part, generally maintained friendly relations with the Delhi sultans and, unlike the Chishtis, belonged to an affluent and landowning institution. The Chishtis did not accept any grants from the sultans and emphasized poverty and austerity as essential to spiritual realization, and consequently they exerted an abiding spiritual power over the hearts of the people of Delhi. Generous throughout his lifetime, Nizāmuddīn Auliya, who never married, is said to have given away all his belongings before he died.

Early biographers of Amīr Khusrau corroborate his deep interest in and involvement with the world of music. Although details about his exact contribution to this field—in the way of theoretical writings on musicology or innovations with instruments—are lacking in the sources of his time and may never be known to us, there is ample evidence in Amīr Khusrau’s own writings that he had more than a cursory interest in music. Each art enhances the other but one is demonstrably more powerful and effective than the other (see [poem 51](#)). Poetry can stand on its own, but the music accompanying it is like an ornament on a bride. Just as there is an apocryphal anecdote about Rūmī passing through the bazaar of the goldsmiths and being inspired by the rhythmic sound of their tools to compose a poem, so there is one about Amīr Khusrau replicating the sound of the cotton carder’s bow in a verse.

References to music and musical instruments abound in Amīr Khusrau’s poetry, but this is not surprising since Persian poets used a broad range of imagery in their poems (see, for example, [poems 12, 30 and 36](#)). However, the details he provides demonstrate that he had technical knowledge of the musical arts. Since Khusrau’s poems were put to music and performed in his own time, he may even have played an active role in setting the lyrics to music. It is regrettable that no theoretical writings on music by Amīr Khusrau survive although they were believed to exist at one time. Scattered references in his works provide some clues regarding the state of music back then. In *Nuh sipihr* (Nine Heavens), he claims that foreign musicians visiting India have introduced new features to Indian music but have not added anything to the basic principles. He says that the sound of Indian music captivates the wild deer, even in the face of the hunter’s arrow: it is pierced and dies, not by the arrow but by the music. In his work *I’jāz-i Khusravī*, Khusrau describes various musical instruments, mentions the accomplished musicians of his day and recounts the arrival of a group of musicians from Central Asia who competed with Indian artistes.

The investigations of the late Indian scholar Shahab Sarmadee have done much to add to our understanding of Khusrau’s place in Indian music. One of the many apocryphal stories about Amīr Khusrau describes his victory in a contest with a famous Indian musician Gopāl and his wresting of the title *nāyāk* (the leader of a musical troupe) for himself. It is also clear that Amīr Khusrau was familiar with both the Indian and Persian musical systems of his day. The exact nature of his experiments with combining the *rāgas* of Indian music with the *maqām* and *pardah* system of Arabic and Persian music cannot be ascertained. He is said to have introduced variations of melody and tempo and come up with over a dozen new modes in Indian music, some of which—such as *sāzgīrī*, *shāhāna*, and *zilāf*—are still known today. The introduction of the *khayāl* genre of music, which is the main vocal form performed today, is often attributed to Amīr Khusrau or to the fifteenth-century Sultan Husain Sharqī of Jaunpur. Another type of composition that he authored is the *tarāna*, an onomatopoeic string of meaningless syllables interspersed with other bits of poetic lines and sung in any *rāga*. With so many attributions to his name, perhaps it is safe to use the term current among musicologists, *Khusravī* style, to describe compositions that may have been influenced by Amīr Khusrau or whose core can be traced to him. His greatest innovations are said to be the instruments *sitār* and *tablā*, now an essential part of Hindustani music, but there is no historical basis to the

claim.

Amīr Khusrau's connections to music continue to be a dynamic part of the living traditions of not only North Indian classical music but also the now universally popular form of *qawwālī*. Music is an essential component of *qawwālī* which is the ecstatic and hypnotic performance of Sufi verses, often accompanied by dance. The use of the term *qawwālī* equally signifies the lyrics of the poems that are employed in the performance, the singing, and the whole presentation itself. The word is derived from the Arabic *qawl* (utterance, speech) and the form is actually a mixture of the Arabic *qawl* and the Persian *ghazal*. The Sufi practice of listening to music (*samā*) as part of their spiritual exercises has been a controversial topic throughout history, but the Chishtis were and are particularly inclined to it, and the art of *qawwālī* has been fostered at their shrine complexes from Delhi and Ajmer to Lahore and Karachi. The invention of this form of dance music and the training of the first generation of singers (*qawwāl bachche*) is often ascribed to Amīr Khusrau. But it is likely that some form of *qawwālī* formed part of the devotional practices of Sufis before Amīr Khusrau. In its present state, it is a uniquely South Asian development that emerged from the universal Sufi practice of dance music and over time has taken on distinct styles according to particular regional influences and schools of music. It is a constantly evolving form and the earliest recordings of *qawwālī* from the turn of the last century are different from the current style of performance, but the core has always been Amīr Khusrau's poetry.

Qawwālī provides the form in which Amīr Khusrau's poetry in Hindavi and Persian is still known and performed in a live context that is completely removed from the written and illustrated tradition of his writings that is part of the culture of books. As literary texts, lyrics sung in *qawwālī* are intertextual and combine Khusrau's poems with occasional Arabic quotations and lines of Persian Sufi poetry. The repertoire of *qawwālī* is dynamic and now accommodates all kinds of Persian, Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi verses. Thus, the language of *qawwālī* appeals to non-Muslims as well as Muslim South Asians since the poet often expresses his devotion for Prophet Muhammad, Hazrat 'Alī or to Nizāmuddīn Auliya in terms that are found in Hindu devotional contexts. The combination of lyrics, especially in the order of the verses, can vary considerably and it is very difficult to establish a fixed text of these poems. Among the *ghazals* translated in this volume, poems 16, 23, 27 and 45 have all entered the *qawwālīs*' repertoire. The renditions by the maestro Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan have especially mesmerized listeners around the world.

Although not a *ghazal*, this well-known verse by Khusrau represents the deep bond between poet and *pīr* that made them one entity:

man tu shudam, tu man shudī
man jān shudam, tu tan shudī
tā nagūyad kasī pas az-īn
man dīgaram u tu dīgarī

I have become you, you have become me.
I have become life, you have become body.
From now on, let no one say that
I am other and you are another.

This is not an unusual couplet in the context of the entire poem, but it has taken on a life of its own and developed into an emblematic Sufi text.

Amīr Khusrau's Hindavi and Persian poems are also sung in a secular context. The Afghan classical performer Ustad Mohammad Sarhang, who was both the court musician of King Zāhir and

professor of music at Kabul University, has rendered the poet's Persian *ghazals* in a style that is characteristic of the Kabul school of classical music with its roots in India. A range of artistes—from the maestro *ghazal* singers such as Iqbal Bano and Mehdi Hasan to popular singers of Bombay cinema such as Mukesh—have sung the Persian lyrics of Amīr Khusrau, contributing new dimensions to the enjoyment of the poems.

Whether Amīr Khusrau really wrote poetry in a vernacular language and, if so, whether the Hindavi corpus ascribed to him is really his work, are difficult questions from a textual and historical point of view. As he himself says:

I am a parrot of India if you ask me candidly.
Ask me in Hindavi so that I can answer you correctly.

This verse has primarily been taken to signify his pride in being a poet in his mother tongue, but is clearly no indication of what he actually composed in this language. Elsewhere, he reiterates this opinion, this time downplaying his ability to compose Arabic verse:

I am a Turk of Hindustan, I answer in Hindavi.
I don't have Egyptian sugar to speak Arabic.

'Sugar' refers to the poet's words that have the quality of sweetness. Such a display of self-deprecation appears to be merely a poetic stance and should not be interpreted literally.

The use of a vernacular register of poetry in Hindavi, using forms such as *gīt* and *dohā*, may have started before Amīr Khusrau, but it became increasingly common from his time onwards. Alongside all the writing taking place in Persian, there was a parallel movement to produce literature in vernacular languages so as to make works more accessible to those who were not literate or who did not participate in the Persian courtly tradition. Both Sufis and Hindu poets of the *bhakti* devotional movement used the language spoken by people in their communities to adapt from and transform the established poetic conventions. In Khusrau's Hindavi poetry, his *pīr* is called the *jag ujiyāro* (world illuminator) and *mahārāj* (emperor) along with a number of other epithets that were shared among devotees of different faiths in India. Literature produced at royal courts was meant for the international, cosmopolitan audience of the broader Persianate world. By contrast, the works found in Sufi *khānaqāhs* had a more local and socially inclusive audience. The entire body of Khusrau's Hindavi poems is based on oral traditions and has been inextricably merged with other folk songs and poems. The written tradition of these works dates only to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The spoken language that was called Hindavi was constantly changing and the songs in their current state perhaps represent the first recorded recension of these works. During the medieval period, minor poets would add their own poems to the oeuvre of recognized masters in order to derive prestige by association with them. However, since nobody doubts the fact that Khusrau wrote in Hindavi and the question of authenticity is moot, the point is to focus on how these texts have been received and continue to be part of a living tradition.

Some of Amīr Khusrau's Hindi verses show how a composite culture blending Perso-Islamic and Indian elements was created (see [poem 54](#)). In a brilliant macaronic poem attributed to him (*zi hāl-i miskīn makun taghāful, durā'e nainān banā'e batiyān*), the poet combines Hindavi and Persian literary tropes and metaphors in the form of a dialogue between a Persian lover (*āshiq*) and pining Indian heroine (*virahinī*). In a lyrical song, Nizāmuddīn Auliya asks the Chishti Sufis to come out in

their ecstatic state and join the celebrations of the Hindu spring festival of Holi, which is an occasion for great revelry and playfulness. True to their acceptance of local practices, Chishtis also celebrate the spring festival of *basant*. According to popular belief, it was an event in Khusrau's life that led them to participate in this festival. One day, he saw some Hindu women singing and carrying mustard flowers to offer to their deity on the religious festival of *basant panchmī*. In order to cheer up Nizāmuddīn Auliya, who was depressed about his nephew's death, Khusrau dressed up like a Hindu woman and proceeded towards his *pīr* singing a song he had heard. This brought a smile to Nizāmuddīn Auliya's face and the festival became a major celebration, with a whole ritual associated with it that is part of the Chishti tradition. There are also songs said to have been composed by Khusrau especially for the occasion of *basant*. Writing in the Indic tradition, some of Khusrau's Hindavi poems are utterances in a female voice that are often addressed to her absent lover or a parent (see [poems 65–73](#)). Translating the Hindavi poems of Khusrau poses a special problem due to the lack of a fixed text and multiple variations current in the oral repertoire. Terms like *rang*, literally 'colour' but conveying a complex range of cultural connotations, also challenge the translator of these poems (see [poems 65](#), [67](#) and [72](#)).

In addition to the devotional songs about Nizāmuddīn Auliya, Amīr Khusrau's name is attached to women's folk songs sung at weddings, riddles, and any genre of Hindavi poetry that involves double entendre or wordplay. The fact that the poet was so fond of puns and enjoyed switching language codes makes a strong case for his having authored this body of literature. In addition to Persian riddles (*chīstān*), there is a category (*dosukhane*) where the question is asked in two languages while the answer is a homonym that answers both questions:

Tishna rā chī mībāyad? (Persian) *Milāp ko kyā chāhiye?* (Hindi/Urdu)
What does the thirsty person need? What is required for a union?

Chāh/Well/Desire

The riddle can take another form:

I saw a wondrous child in the land of Hindustan, his skin covered his hair, and his hair his bones!

Answer: Mango

There are innumerable riddles like these in a *Khusravī* mode whose corpus increased over the centuries.

Folk poetry also draws on another genre, the quatrain in the *shahrāshūb* genre, which in Persian is a flirtatious exchange between the poet and a beautiful lad (or lady in the Indian context) who is engaged in a particular trade or task. In some of these, the first three lines are Persian while the last is mixed Persian–Hindavi. In [poem 64](#), the last line uttered by the woman is a pun, i.e., it can be read in either Persian or Hindavi. A selection of Khusrau's poems of this type has been included in the translations (see [poems 55–64](#)), although at times one has to resort to the glossary to understand the meaning of a certain term on which the conceit of the poem hinges. The range of people that the poet addresses represents the social range of a typical Indian city and reveals his fascination for the details of everyday life. Khusrau's playful side can also be seen in a category of Hindavi poetry of a bawdy nature—called *kah mukarnī*—which takes the form of two female friends conversing about one of their lovers. These poems also rely on witty wordplay and were traditionally sung by women.

There are a number of such *mukarnīs* attributed to Khusrau, and although it is difficult to capture the earthiness of the original in English, a few of these are included in this volume ([poems 74–78](#)).

In the same way that Amīr Khusrau has been crowned as the father of Indo-Persian poetry, so he has been invoked as the founder of the Urdu language in order to enhance the prestige of the language that is relatively new in South Asia, but related to Hindavi and Persian. Thus, works like the once popular *Tale of the Four Dervishes*, which is extant in Urdu translations, was wrongly attributed to Amīr Khusrau, as was the dictionary of Persian–Hindi, *Khāliq bārī*, that is now believed to have been written in the seventeenth century by one Ziyāuddīn Khusrau.

Abū Rayhān al-Bīrūnī (d. 1048), who had accompanied Sultan Mahmūd to India, was the first learned Muslim to write about India in a systematic and scientific manner in his scholarly work *Kitāb al-Hind* as a result of first-hand observation of its peoples and cultural practices. Although al-Bīrūnī had studied Sanskrit to be able to read Hindu texts, his viewpoint was that of an outsider. Later, in the Mughal period, the courtier Abū al-Fazl (d. 1602) in his monumental *Ā'in-i Akbarī* (Institutes of Akbar) had continued the scientific tradition of documenting everything about India. But no other author in Persian can match Khusrau's imaginative style when writing about India. From his elaborate system of languages to quotidian titbits of information, his works have done much to enhance our knowledge about thirteenth- and fourteenth-century India. However, it should be kept in mind that Khusrau is not claiming to be a detached scholar like al-Bīrūnī, and some of his fanciful ideas must be understood in the context of his creative endeavour and the different literary genres he employs.

The *Nuh sipihr* (Nine Heavens) is a literary tour de force in verse that has never been matched in the history of Persian literature. Section three of this work consists of an encyclopaedic paean to the land of his birth and provides information on different aspects of Indian culture. Khusrau puts forward his belief in the superiority of India in the Islamic world in no uncertain terms and constructs several fanciful arguments to prove that India is akin to paradise: it is the land to which Adam first came after being expelled from paradise, according to one Islamic tradition; the peacock, the bird of paradise, is a native species; the climate is pleasant and moderate, he says, referring to a saying (*hadīth*) by Prophet Muhammad that he enjoyed the cool breeze that wafted from India; and last but not least, India is superior because the poet's patron lives there. To settle the matter, he boasts that this is the land where a great poet like himself resides! The abundance of the flora and fauna, fruits like mangoes and bananas, spices like cardamom and cloves, and the quintessentially Indian betel leaf (*pān*) add to the virtues of this land. He goes on to describe the religion and learning of the Brahmins in a lively and anecdotal style. India's contributions to world civilization include the game of chess and the book of stories *Kalīla wa Dimna* that was translated from the Sanskrit *Panchatantra* into Middle Persian and other Middle Eastern languages. There is a compendium of the different kinds of birds and animals found in India here, as well as descriptions of the marvels and wonders of the land, especially the supernatural powers of the Hindu yogis. Towards the end of the India section of the work, he comments on the intelligence of the inhabitants of the country and the openness of the culture:

If a Khurasani, Greek or Arab comes here,
he will not face any problems,
for the people will treat him kindly, as their own,
making him feel happy and at ease.
And if they jest with him,
they do so with blooming smiles.

It is remarkable that this perception of India as an open society, which seems quite modern in some ways, was already formed in the early fourteenth century.

In this work Khusrau claims that he has learned several languages, and the poet propounds a fascinating discourse on the languages of the world:

Hindavi was the language from old times; when the Ghurids and Turks arrived [in India], Persian began to be used and every high and low person learned it ... As I belong to India, it is only fitting that I talk about it. There is a different, original language in every region of this land. Sindhi, Lahori, Kashmiri, Kibar, Dhaur Samundari, Tilangi, Gujar, Ma'bari, Gauri, the languages of Bangalah, Avadh, Delhi and its environs, all these are Hindavi, i.e., Indian languages, current since the olden days and commonly used for all kinds of speech. There is yet another language that is favoured by all the Brahmins. It is known as Sanskrit since ancient times; common people do not know it, only the Brahmins do, but one single Brahmin cannot comprehend its limits. Like Arabic, Sanskrit has a grammar, rules of syntax, and a literature ... Sanskrit is a pearl; it may be inferior to Arabic but is superior to Dari ... If I knew it well I would praise my sultan in it also.

In Khusrau's world view, the three classical languages of Islam, Arabic, Persian and Turkish, complement the host of Indian languages, and each has its specific sphere of usage, either as a language of learning, administration, literature or communication. It seems that Turkish was spoken by an elite group in India but no literature in it was produced, even by the poet, who in [poem 37](#) playfully bemoans his inability to speak in the language of his Turkish-speaking paramour. Persian was more current in India for administrative and literary purposes, but it did not seem to be in competition with any other major language. Elsewhere, in the introduction to his third *dīvān*, he includes a similar discussion about languages, where he states that unlike Hindavi, which changes every hundred miles, the Persian of India, i.e., Dari, is standard from the river Indus to the Indian Ocean and does not have dialect variants as in Iran. 'What is amusing,' he declares, 'is that we [Indians] have composed poetry in the languages of all people [of the world] but no one has composed poetry in our language.'

In this encyclopaedic section on India in his work, Amīr Khusrau is attempting to put forward an alternative world view, one that is Indo-centric and that challenges the existing ideas about the classification of civilizations in the world of Islam. Islam is central to this new world view, but there is room for all the complexities of Indian cultural traditions. Khusrau's hyperbolic arguments must be seen as rhetorical exercises intended to impress his audience. What he is trying to do in this work is to instill a sense of pride in Indians, Muslims in particular, and to give them a distinct culture within the context of a larger Islamic civilization, just as the Arabs and Persians had their own culture from early Islamic times. He sincerely believes that the *sharī'at* attained perfection in India and that it was the ideal place for the flowering of Muslim civilization.

AMĪR KHUSRAU'S PERSIAN POETRY

Amīr Khusrau's literary achievements in Persian form a seminal part of both the Indo-Persian tradition and of the broader, trans-regional Persian literary canon that includes the works of classical poets such as Nizāmī, Sa'dī and Hāfiz. The first generation of Persian poets in India from the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries in Ghaznavid Lahore, such as Abū al-Faraj Rūnī and Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān, continued the Persian literary traditions of the Iranian courts in the poetic genres and imagery that they employed. Of these two early poets, it is in the works of Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān that we find the earliest consciousness of a new poetics and the expansion of the traditional world view to include elements of the new landscape. Gradually, a distinctly Indo-Persian literature came into existence that lasted until the twentieth century. In the two centuries intervening between this time and

that of Amīr Khusrau, Persian poetry was written and cultivated in the subcontinent, mostly at the Ghaznavid court in Lahore, but much of this body of work is lost to us and only stray verses survive as quotations in dictionaries, historical works or anthologies. When Delhi became the capital city of the new rulers, it inherited many of the cultural institutions and literary practices of the earlier Ghaznavid court, causing a new literary florescence. The primary agents in this process were Amīr Khusrau and Hasan. The Sufi literary scene of Khusrau's time was as brisk as the courtly one. There were a number of non-courtly Sufi writers such as Ziyāuddin Nakhshabī, author of the Persian rendition of the popular Sanskrit work *Tūtīnāma* (Tales of the Parrot), and the ecstatic mystic Bū 'All Qalandar who had migrated from Iraq to keep company with the Chishtis.

The Sufi *khānaqāh* was an important location in medieval Indian society where poetry was produced and performed in a less elitist atmosphere than the royal court. Amīr Khusrau seems to be one of the few poets who was simultaneously a court poet in the business of praising kings as well as a Sufi poet whose poems were performed in a mystical context. Khusrau's affiliation with the Chishti Sufis strengthened during the time when Nizāmuddīn Auliya was achieving an eminent status in the city, and his meeting place (*khānaqāh* or *jamā'atkhāna*) in the village of Ghiyaspur (the present-day Nizamuddin area of Delhi) was a spiritual centre where people from all walks of life gathered to listen to his words and join in mystical sessions. The Sufis had a major role in the conversion of Indians to Islam and their presence in Delhi acted as a stabilizing force in the face of the uncertainties of court politics for they looked after the spiritual welfare of the community. 'Alāuddīn Khaljī's son, Khizr Khān, who was one of Amīr Khusrau's patrons, was also a devoted follower of Nizāmuddīn Auliya. Although 'Alāuddīn Khaljī himself did not frequent the Sufi *khānaqāhs*, he was positively inclined towards them, and thus Khusrau dedicated many of his works—in fact, all the poems of his *khamsa*—to both his mentors simultaneously. Khusrau celebrated his spiritual master, who was known as the *mahbūb-i ilāhī* (Beloved of God), in poems written in all the literary genres available to him. For example, in poem 17, Khusrau almost certainly refers to Nizāmuddīn as 'God's good servant', his refuge from life's transience, and in poem 50, he celebrates his court as the place where angels flock like doves.

Amīr Khusrau was extremely conscious of his multicultural heritage. From his mother he acquired knowledge of the local culture and language which translated into an abiding love for indigenous traditions. As a poet writing in Persian he was aware of the larger world of Persian literary culture in which texts had a wide circulation across much of the non-Arab Islamic world. He writes with relish of the attractive quality of the Persian language:

Truly, the language of Fars is like pickles for without pickles, food does not taste as good.

Highly educated audiences across the Persian-speaking world read his poems, but he was also judged locally by Indian critics and by standards that may not have been universal. He belonged to multiple worlds. It would appear that the Turk (the conqueror, lover) and the Hindu (the conquered slave, beloved), an extremely popular trope in Persian court poetry, came together in his person. As he says:

The opposition has been removed from Turk and Hindu, for Hindustan has become one with Khurasan.

Since Khusrau was both of Turkish and Indian origins, he embodied the resolution of this conflict of opposites, and by bridging cultures he gave a distinct identity to Indo-Persian literature.

The panegyric ode (*qasīda*) was the most prestigious genre for the Persian court poet of this

period. Many of Khusrau's early *qasīdas* are in the style of the great Persian poets of the Ghaznavid and Seljuq periods, such as Farrukhī, Anvarī, Khāqānī and Zahīr, who served as models for fledgling court poets right down to the nineteenth century. These odes are highly wrought poems that were written for ceremonial occasions and festivals such as the Iranian new year (*naurūz*) which was celebrated at Indian courts, and the Islamic Id al-Fitr and Id al-Azhā. Poems in this genre granted the poet an opportunity to advertise his patron's virtues while at the same time allowing him to comment upon the relationship between himself and his patron, and between himself and the poets of the past. As Khusrau tells one patron in a *qasīda*:

Even though I am the nightingale of words in the world's rose garden,
I flit about in this garden on the branch of your fortune.
Don't forget me where your kindness goes hunting,
for crows and ravens eat the leftovers of royal falcons.

Such poems employed an elevated and dignified diction and a wide and often learned vocabulary. Though clearly hyperbolic, they were often infused with genuine feeling, for the bond between patron and poet was sometimes very strong and, as mentioned before, poets at court often had the additional role of boon companion. Khusrau also wrote many *qasīdas* in praise of Nizāmuddīn Auliya that are similarly solemn in tone but which draw on the mystical register of language. Poets normally used a highly metaphorical language to describe their patrons in panegyric poems.

But Khusrau is better known today for his lyric poetry, in the form of the *ghazal*, which had become the most popular literary genre in Persian by the time he was writing; its diction is simpler than that of the *qasīda* and its main subject matter, love, more universal in its appeal. The setting of a *ghazal* could be either the ruler's court or the Sufi cloister, and the object of desire either an earthly beauty or the sacred divine. The difficulty of categorizing Khusrau's *ghazals* as either amatory or mystical is all the greater since he was active in courtly and Sufi circles at once, and the ethos of courtly love that informs his poetry can conventionally be read as an allegory of longing for the divine. This ethos will be recognizable to readers who are familiar with the European sonnet tradition: the lowly lover humbles himself as a slave, an exile, or a beggar before a beautiful, unattainable, and cruel beloved; union and fulfilment can only be imagined and suffering is inevitably the lover's lot. In the *ghazal*, this love generally has a homoerotic dimension, since the beloved is often a young boy, a literary convention in early Persian *ghazals* which derived their context from courtly banquets where pageboys and *sāqīs* were present, or Sufi circles where handsome, beardless boys (*shāhids*) were considered a witness to divine beauty. The device of using a female voice to express longing for a lover is characteristic of Indic poetry and Khusrau used it expertly in his Hindavi poems, where grammatical gender allows the poet to adopt personas of either sex. In contrast, this remains a moot point in his *ghazals* since Persian has no grammatical gender and the beauty of the work, to some extent, relies on sexual ambiguity. To suggest this ambiguity in English, with its mandatory distinction between 'he' and 'she', we have used both pronouns to represent the poet's object of desire, the elusive other without whom the lover cannot be complete.

Although the poet in the *ghazal* usually speaks in the voice of the yearning, heart-sick lover, this voice is at times tinged with teasing and even lascivious banter ([poems 23](#) or [37](#)), or even outright reproach ([poem 43](#)). The lover on occasion even imagines or remembers rare moments of fulfilment ([poems 5](#) or [14](#)). On still other occasions, we hear the voice of an older man who chides himself for still being addicted to wine and boys, symbols for earthly snares that distract one from the mystical path ([poems 8](#) or [35](#)). This voice is closely related to the homiletic voice of the sage, who warns

against the snares, deceptions, and unfaithfulness of the world or earthly existence ([poems 22](#) or [25](#)). Our selection of *ghazals* contains representatives of all these voices.

Another feature of the *ghazal* that is regularly found in Amīr Khusrau's poems is the Sufi habit of taking an irreverent attitude towards the outer trappings of Islam, which results in blasphemous utterances. Only the poet/lover who thwarts the rules of society and religion and in the process becomes an infidel, i.e., Hindu in the Indian context and Christian or Zoroastrian in the Iranian, is able to traverse the true path of love. By drinking wine and dallying with young lads, he breaks societal and religious norms, as represented by narrow-minded practitioners of religion such as the muezzin and holy warrior (*ghdāzī*). The fact that many of his poems have Sufi overtones does not necessarily mean that all his lyrics should be viewed as mystical. Sufi terminology and imagery had permeated lyric poetry to such an extent that sharp distinctions between secular and mystical poetry were no longer valid. As a literary craftsman, Amīr Khusrau was well aware of his predecessors and consciously imitated them. His main predecessors in the genre of the *ghazal* were Sa'dī, who did not write mystical *ghazals*, and 'Irāqī, whose verses are entirely Sufi. Khusrau's own poems draw from both types. The fact that some of his poems are part of the practice of Sufism today does render them mystical in the context of performance, but this may not have been their original context or intent. Precisely what criteria played a role in a poem being performed in a mystical setting is not an easy question to answer. Basically any *ghazal* of Amīr Khusrau can be considered mystical depending on the context in which it is sung. The poet may consciously have written some *ghazals* exclusively for use in Sufi gatherings at Nizāmuddīn Auliya's *khānaqāh* (for example, poems 18 or 30), and others that were meant for a courtly audience; but many were bound to be used in both contexts based on their appeal for contemporary audiences.

The popularity of Urdu *ghazals* today among South Asians around the world provides an example of the viability and universal appeal of this poetic form from the time of Khusrau. Although the Urdu *ghazal* ultimately has roots in the Indo-Persian lyric of a few centuries after Khusrau, he played a central part in popularizing the form and establishing its aesthetic parameters. Khusrau sometimes combined in a subtle manner the Persian and Indic poetic traditions with which he was familiar. The first poem in his *dīvān* is one of the most brilliant and popular of his *ghazals*. The poem is reminiscent of a genre of Indian folk song where the beloved pines for her lover in the monsoon season, but here the poet has cleverly included the cloud as a participant in the drama of the lovers. Although the speaker/lover laments his imminent separation from the cruel beloved, he ends by declaring that the beloved, and not he, will be harmed by this separation.

A look at the Persian text of the opening line of this poem suggests some of the daunting difficulties faced in recreating Persian poetry and, in particular, the notoriously 'untranslatable' *ghazal* in English:

abr mībārad u man mīshavam az yār judā
chun kunam dil bi-chunīn rūz zi dildār judā.

This verse exhibits the rhyme between half-verses—between 'yār' and 'dildār—that characterizes the opening line of any *ghazal*; the following verses are similarly divided into two, but rhyme only at the end of the second half of the verse. A refrain-word (*radīf*)—'judā'—follows each rhyming syllable. Due to differences in phonetic structure, English is rhyme-poor compared to Persian, and maintaining the mono-rhyme over all nine verses in English would inevitably sound forced and lead to unacceptable distortions in meaning and imagery. We have, however, tried to maintain the effect of the refrain by using words with the syllable 'part' in each stanza of our translation. Ranging between

twenty-four and thirty-two syllables, the Persian *ghazal* verse is far longer than any conventional verse form in English, and each Persian verse is in many ways a self-standing unit in syntax and imagery. Often only a few verses from a poem would be selected for inclusion in a musical performance or anthology. In English poetics, the closest analogy to the Persian verse seems to be the stanza, and our translations frequently use short stanzas to represent each verse. Syntax and imagery can unfold in many different ways within the long Persian verse, and in the translation of poem 1, the stanzas have been shaped to reflect this. (In other *ghazals*, stanzas of two to five lines are used consistently throughout a poem.) Since each verse is self-contained in grammar and imagery, the connections between verses is often much looser than we are accustomed to in other literary forms. But in poem 1, as in many of Khusrau's other *ghazals*, there is clear coherence of mood, setting, imagery, and tone throughout the poem. To convey the development of thought and mood between verses and over the course of the poem, we have sometimes combined consecutive verses into stanzas. Read together, the variety in the visual, metrical, and conceptual segmentation of the poems is meant to represent the aural variety of the varying rhymes and metres in Persian.

[Poem 1](#) also contains two conventional images that Khusrau returns to repeatedly and with particular intensity. First is the image complex of tears, weeping, and the gaze: 'Cracks breach my eyes weeping for you.' In the most concrete, physical terms, this image refers to the blood-red capillaries that appear in people's eyes when they cry. But as the reiterated image of 'bloody tears' suggests, this physical phenomenon takes on a deep symbolic resonance. Tears are imagined to well up from the heart and, like the poem itself, to be the outward sign of the speaker's inner turmoil and suffering. Conversely, the reflected image of the beloved in the speaker's eyes is a visible mark of the impact which the beloved has on the poet's mind and emotions. The gaze of the beloved is a weapon, an arrow that pierces the core of the lover's being. Second is the image of the beloved's hair. As in [poem 1](#), the tresses of the beloved are often likened to chains. Their curling strands and 'locks' represent the dark, captivating force of desire which threatens to dismember the speaker's personality and plunge him into a swirling abyss of passion. A strand of hair is also used to cast black-magic spells of possession. These two images are the subject of an almost endless play of metaphor and trope in Khusrau's poetry, and embody the speaker's psychology of yearning.

In the centuries after he lived, selections of Amīr Khusrau's lyrics were included in innumerable anthologies, engraved on objects, or used to display the art of calligraphy, indicating not only his prodigious output but also the universality of his appeal. Khusrau's *ghazals* have had a great impact on later poets, including the master poet of this genre—Hāfiz of Shiraz. The *ghazals* also have a continuous oral tradition to this day, especially in Central and South Asia, even though Persian is no longer widely understood in the latter region. Even in the fifteenth century it was difficult to collect all the writings of Khusrau. From the vast corpus of Persian *ghazals* authored by Amīr Khusrau—1,981 in the Lahore edition used in our translations—the few that are performed today probably have long been popular in an oral setting. It is also to be expected that in an environment where orality was the privileged form of disseminating a text, there would be some degree of misattribution or confusion, as in the case of this couplet:

Every community has its own path of religion and place of prayer.
I have set my *qibla* in the direction of the one with his cap awry.

In a mystical interpretation of this verse, the young boy with his cap awry is read as the divine beloved or his earthly representative. The context of this verse is thought to be an exchange between

Nizāmuddīn Auliyyā, to whom the first line is attributed, and Khusrau, who replied with the second. However, the entire *ghazal* is found in Hasan’s *dīvān*. The misattribution persists because these three individuals were so inextricably linked, a blurring of identities that only increased over time. The Mughal emperor Jahāngīr (r. 1605–16) narrates in his memoirs, *Tuzūk-i Jahdngīrī*, that during a *qawwālī* session at court when this line was being performed, a courtier passed away while trying to explain the subtleties of its meaning!

By Amīr Khusrau’s time, the works of several major poets were coming to be recognized as the core of the classical Persian canon. Sa’dī has already been mentioned as a master poet of love lyrics and didactic literature who was greatly admired by all Persian poets, but two other poets may have had an even greater impact on the tradition: Firdausī with his Iranian epic, *Shāhnāma* (Book of Kings), and Nizāmī with his quintet (*khamsa*) of narrative poems. Both poets composed heroic or romantic tales in the *masnavī* form (a narrative or discursive poem in rhymed couplets) whose topics were morality, kingship and courtly love. They had a universal appeal in the Persianate world, and the *Shāhnāma*, dealing with pre-Islamic kings of Iran, was especially popular in royal courts because it espoused ideals of kingship and ethical behaviour. Nizāmī’s influence on poets who wrote long narrative tales was just as extensive, and innumerable poets imitated his *khamsa* over the centuries. If Firdausī’s *Shāhnāma* was a source of political legitimacy, Nizāmī’s *khamsa* was one of cultural prestige. The five works in the *khamsa* contained all the elements that were part and parcel of the Persian literary universe: Iranian and Arab romantic legends, the pre-Islamic Greek and Iranian historical past, didactic and philosophical discourses, all of which came to be accepted as the epitome of the civilization’s cultural achievement.

Amīr Khusrau was the first poet who set out to match Nizāmī’s achievements, not to outdo him but rather to measure up to his standard by producing works that would be more relevant to his own milieu. No one has surpassed Nizāmī in the beauty of his language and the subtlety of his thoughts. Khusrau’s strengths lay in his fast-paced narrative and light-heartedness, and his fondness for wordplay and double entendre. In these poems, he was able to express himself fully as a storyteller. He himself compares his accomplishments to the great master at the conclusion of the *Hasht bihisht*:

If honey is useful,
vinegar too has its buyers.
If a pearl is expensive,
amber too has value.
This work is without blemish.
It has glitter, if not gold.

Elsewhere, with regard to the material he has to work with and knowing that he will be compared to his great predecessor, Khusrau playfully complains that Nizāmī had consumed the fine wine from the goblet of the subject matter of the stories, and left the dregs for the other poets.

As part of his quintet, Amīr Khusrau wrote his versions of Nizāmī’s two most popular romances, *Shīrīn and Khusrau*, and *Majnūn and Lailā*. He inverted the order of the names of the lovers in the titles to distinguish his versions from those of Nizāmī, but did not change the basic plots of the stories, although there are a few new elements in the order of events and the portrayal of characters. The first story is set in the pre-Islamic Iranian past but is more legend than historical truth. It revolves around Shīrīn, an Armenian princess, and Khusrau Parvīz (r. 590–628), the namesake of our poet and a ruler of Iran belonging to the Sassanian dynasty. The two fall in love early on but are separated for a long time by Khusrau Parvīz’s involvement in military campaigns and his short-lived marriages to

Maryam, the Byzantine princess, and Shikar, a slave girl. In the meantime, Shīrīn becomes the object of an ardent love by Farhād, a sculptor and, in this version, the son of the emperor of China. Both Khusrau and Shīrīn have their respective rivals murdered and marry, but their union does not last long because Khusrau is killed by his son Shīrūya, who wants to marry his stepmother Shīrīn. Ultimately, Shīrīn commits suicide over Khusrau's grave on her wedding day.

The story of Qais and Lailā is set among the nomadic tribes of the deserts of Arabia. Khusrau gave his personal touch to this story by changing the chaste nature of Majnūn and Lailā's relationship to include physical contact and sexual desire. The two protagonists fall in love when they are children in school but society does not approve. Qais spends much of his time in the wilderness and becomes a madman (Majnūn), wasting away in his love and with animals as his companions. Lailā (or Lailī) is also pining for her lover; when she hears a false rumour about his death, she falls ill and dies. When she is being buried, Majnūn jumps into the grave and dies clutching the body of his beloved. Majnūn's behaviour is extreme in every respect and his character possesses all the qualities of a typical lover of *ghazal* poetry (see [Poem 12](#)). The intensity of his passion transcends cultural boundaries and has immortalized this story not just in the Middle East, but also in South Asia and beyond. In Sufi poetry, especially, the character of Majnūn is given a mystical spin, symbolizing martyrdom in the path of love.

On the model of Nizāmī's *Iskandarnāma* (Book of Alexander), Khusrau versified the Alexander romance and his version is called the *Ā'īna-yi Iskandarī* (The Alexandrine Mirror). In his version of the adventures of Alexander, Khusrau sought to take Alexander further than Nizāmī had done and portrays Alexander not so much as a prophet and philosopher but as an adventurer and a scientist. The work has a romantic interlude when Alexander weds Kanīfū, the Amazonian Turk whose father served the Chinese emperor, after he defeats her in a duel.

The other works in Nizāmī's quintet, the first and the last in the set, also contain themes of love. The *Makhzan al-asrār* (Treasury of Secrets) consists of twenty ethical and spiritual discourses followed by short anecdotes. Khusrau's version, *Matla' al-anvār* (Rising Place of Lights), includes a story that fits the cultural context of the poet: a pious Brahmin who is crawling towards his idol impresses a Muslim pilgrim with his devotion, and by example educates him about Islam. It was in his last work, which required the inclusion of new stories and action-filled narratives, that Khusrau was able to exercise his own literary preferences in choosing the material. Nizāmī's *Haft paikar* (Seven Beauties) is a collection of stories told to the Iranian king Bahrām Gūr by seven princesses associated with seven different colours, who represent the different climes of the world. In Khusrau's *Hasht bihisht* (Eight Paradises), which has one more tale than Nizāmī's work, the stories are longer, faster-paced than Nizāmī's, full of witty wordplay and with complex plots that involve love, magic and adventure. Khusrau altered Nizāmī's original story by having his female protagonist Dilārām become adept at all kinds of musical arts, instead of achieving physical prowess, to impress the king, Bahrām Gūr. The details in the tales show that the poet is certainly drawing on his Indian background by including stories that he would have heard orally. One of these stories seems to have its source in the *Tūtīnāma* and another, 'The Tale of the Camphor Princess', translated here as poem 80, has elements from the Sohni–Mahīvāl legend of the Indus region, but is devoid of any mystical content. In his verse romances, Khusrau often sacrifices aesthetics for the sake of narrative, and our verse translation attempts to convey the rapid movement of the tale without forcing rhyme and metre on individual lines.

The lovers in these stories remain the epitome of romantic love in Persianate literature to this day. On a broader level, the romances of Nizāmī and Amīr Khusrau explore the nature of love that is a

source for the wisdom that leads to justice and universal harmony. Subsequent poets in the Persianate traditions not only imitated the two poets in retelling the stories but also translated or used them as models for local love stories in other related literary cultures such as Turkish and Urdu. Khusrau's versions vary in plot and stylistics from Nizāmī's. There is less emphasis on the development of characters than on the pacing and elaboration of the plot. For instance, in the story of Khusrau and Shīrīn, Amīr Khusrau gives a bigger role to Farhād, portraying him much like Majnūn, a passionate and devoted lover, and his character overshadows the others. Farhād also plays a crucial role in the signature verse at the end of many of Khusrau's *ghazals*, such as in [poem 13](#) and [38](#). So though the poet's pen-name is the same as the king who wins Shīrīn's love, the poet identifies with the lovelorn artist Farhād, whose love for Shīrīn results in his death. Khusrau's *khamisa* was read and imitated by later poets as assiduously as Nizāmī's, and due to the rich content of its stories, was often illustrated. [Poem 53](#) is in the *munāzara* (dialogue) form in which the two lovers—Khusrau the king and Farhād—vie for Shīrīn's love.

Amīr Khusrau wrote his *khamisa* as a tribute to Nizāmī and in order to establish his standing as a poet. Once he had completed it, he returned to something he had tried earlier: writing narrative poetry using actual events of his time as the plot. His purpose here was to achieve something that would distinguish him in Persian literary history as an innovator rather than an imitator. At this time, the panegyric ode was losing ground not only to the *ghazal* but also to the narrative *masnavī*. Narrative poetry in Persian usually dealt with epic and romantic legends from the past that had relevance to concerns from the author's own times. Khusrau's personal engagement with the court and the political events of his times, by contrast, allowed him to present living history by casting current events as romantic or didactic fiction. He wrote five *masnavīs*, one in the reign of each sultan that he served, all dealing with courtly life. None of them included any events of his own personal life or the world around Nizāmuddīn Auliya, although by dedicating each work to the latter he was bridging the gap between the royal court and the Sufi *khānaqāh*. Since they are neither purely historical nor wholly poetic, these romanticized historical narratives pose problems for both historians and literary critics. The truth is that each work stands on its own, and they are of uneven quality. But it is precisely the mixed nature of these works that make them a fascinating subject of study.

According to Khusrau, the third of these historical poems, '*Ashīqa* (Beloved)—also known by the titles '*Ishqīya* (Love Story) and *Duval Rānī Khizr Khān*—is the symbolic union of the two major Indian traditions that produced the rich culture whose history begins with the poet himself. The '*Ishqīya* was completed in 1315, more than a decade after Khusrau had written his *khamisa*. It is probably his best-known historical narrative poem and the one that has been most often illustrated. Since it would have been impossible to include a complete translation of this romance, we have included a mixed prose and verse rendition that conveys the essential story and suggests the style of its narration ([poem 79](#)). There was a popular tradition in pre-modern Persianate cultures of oral narrations that consisted of a prose summary, with choice original verses, of long epic tales. The recent translation of the Persian epic, *Shāhnāma*, by Dick Davis shows the appeal of such a prosimetrum style for modern readers and has been an inspiration behind [poem 79](#). This long narrative tale describes the love of Sultan 'Alāuddīn's son, the young prince Khizr Khān for the Hindu princess Devaldei (or Duval Rānī), who was the daughter of Raja Karan of Gujarat. Khizr Khān was a well-liked and admired prince who was also a disciple of Nizāmuddīn Auliya. For these reasons, Khusrau must have been personally close to him. After the conquest of Gujarat in 1297 by Ulugh Khān, Princess Devaldei was brought to Delhi and raised in the royal harem. In a fairy-tale-like turn of events, the young prince and princess fall in love, and despite the designs of the prince's mother to

keep them apart they are united in marriage. This is the point where Khusrau had ended his romance, but the lovers had a tragic end when Khizr Khān was imprisoned, blinded and finally killed in the Gwalior fortress by his brother Mubārak Shāh in his bid for the throne. After the four years of this sultan's rule came to an end, Khusrau updated the narrative and concluded the tale on this sad note. Khusrau declares that he wanted to create an Indian love story to match the legendary tales of lovers such as Vis and Rāmīn, Vāmiq and Azrā, and Lailā and Majnūn. In laying out the background for the story, the poet gives a short history of the Islamic civilization in India which culminates in the union of the two lovers, symbolically representing the synthesis of the two major cultures of the time. Along with the narrative the work is interspersed with dialogues between the two lovers and didactic stories.

In keeping with his literary versatility and creativity, Amīr Khusrau also wrote some prose works that have not been as popular as his poetry, nor had much of an impact on Indo-Persian writers after him. Not every poet wrote prose, and prose was ranked much lower than poetry in the hierarchy of literary genres. Accordingly, we have not included translations of Khusrau's prose works in this collection.

But one of these works, the introduction to one of his collections of *ghazals* (*Dībācha-yi dīvān-i ghurrat-i kamāl*), not only provides a literary autobiography, our primary source of information on the poet's life, but also a treatise on poetics. In it, Khusrau presents the two qualities that he most prized in poetry: *ravānī* (fluency) and *īhām* (double entendre or punning). *Ravānī* was prized by many medieval Persian poets who aimed at an easy yet elegant style. Khusrau says that the style of a great poet should be simple (not like that of preachers), free of errors and original. He describes the gradual development of his poetic temperament from the cold and dry formality of his early *ghazals* towards a water-like, gentle softness, ending in his later poems in a delicate, well-seasoned perfection that can even set fire to a heart that is cold and devoid of passion. We have aimed for similar fluency in our translations, presenting the flow of images and emotions in Khusrau's poetry as accurately and clearly as possible, offering a plainer, though, we hope, no less substantive fare than the original texts. The second desirable quality in poetry, *īhām*, is Khusrau's favourite rhetorical device. He says, '[My] talent has established *īhām* as clearer than a mirror, for in a mirror more than one image does not appear from an object. But this is a mirror that when you look into it, seven true and clear images will appear.' Khusrau's *īhām* is similar to Ezra Pound's concept of *logopoeia*, the multiple usages, connotations, ironies, and associations that a word acquires over history. For Pound, this aspect of poetic language is untranslatable, but we hope that our diverse selection of Khusrau's poetry—from various genres, in various languages—will help create in English a sense of how the poet manipulated the key terms and images in his poetic language.

Khusrau placed a high epistemological—as well as artistic—value on poetry. Comparing discursive learning with poetry, he writes, 'Knowledge remains veiled by the minutiae of facts, while poetry becomes well known due to the manipulation of facts.' He continues, 'Poetry is higher than wisdom and wisdom lies at the bottom of poetry. A poet can be called a wise man but a wise man cannot be called a poet. Magic is considered part of rhetoric but rhetoric is not magic. Therefore, a poet can be called a magician but a magician cannot be called a poet.' We are privileged to offer some tastes of this magical brew of wisdom and poetry to English readers, much of it for the first time.

Ghazals



1 *Ghazal 1: abr mībārad u man mīshavam az yār judā*

The clouds rain down,
and I am parted from my love.
On a day like today, how can I part
my heart from my heart's love?

The clouds and the rain and
I and my love waiting to say farewell:
For my part, weeping,
and for the cloud's part,
and for my love's.

The new sprouts,
the joyous air,
the garden bright green,
and the black-faced nightingale
parted from the roses.

Ah me, shackled to your every strand of hair.
What are you doing, pulling me
apart limb from limb?

My eyes rain down tears
for you, the pupil of my eyes. Stand strong.
Don't depart on this flood of tears.

I will no longer need the gift of sight
after my eyes are parted
from the gift of the sight of you.

Cracks breach my eyes weeping for you.
Quick, take clay from your path
and patch the parting cracks in the wall.

Don't depart.
I will give you my soul.
If you don't believe me,
if you want more,
take and keep it.

Your beauty won't last long when you leave Khusrau.
The rose doesn't last long parted from the thorn.

2 *Ghazal 69: basī shab bā mahī būdam kujā shud ān hama shabhā*

Many nights I was with a moon.

Where are all those nights gone?
It's night again now, dark
with the smoke of my cries.

Happy nights I spent with her,
giddy at times or drunk.
When I recall those nights,
my world goes black.

I used to rehearse the tale
of her eyelashes and brows
over and again like children
reciting the Qur'ān at school.

What might happen one night
if she asks how a stranger
below her wall passes
the night these lonely nights?

You are the meaning behind every form.
Come, let lovers—
forms without meaning—
live again in your street.

Though you robbed me of heart
and soul, look at me and see
how finely that smile came
from those lips into these eyes.

Don't grieve for your life
though the friend slays you, Khusrau.
The beautiful have many sects
that act this way.

3 *Ghazal 74: dīvāna mīkunī dil-u jān-i kharāb-rā*

You drive my ruined heart and soul insane.
Don't twirl your hair in sport
and break those chains of pure musk.

Though it's a sin to shed innocent
blood, come shed my blood
and earn holy blessings.

Don't waste rose water on beggars' robes:
this age does not deserve
the perfume of love's union.

Love, how did you come to work
on a nobody like me? Is no one else
left in this ruined world?

Not having dreamt bitter dreams
a single night, how can they know
the taste of aching absence?

The times suffer a drought of faithfulness
and storms well up in the eyes:
When will the stars decree this omen of rain?

We are slaves to a glance always

ready to parry. As soon as I said, Kill!
he brandished his eyelash sword.

If he's happy killing the helpless,
let straightforwardness,
Lord, speed his arrow's flight.

In vain is the devastating
beauty of ephebe and *sāqī*.
As an intoxicant wine is falsely accused.

From heart's fire my sobbing
lets fall tears of blood:
The roast sobs sweetly over the flame.

Khusrau cannot staunch his burning tears.
Yes, the hot kettle brings water to a boil.

4 Ghazal 129: *tā bar sar-i bāzār bi-mastī qadamash raft*

As he reeled drunkenly through the bazaar,
everything people had amassed got swept
away on the winds of his tyranny,
and whatever patience or composure
my burning heart once had was lost
in the spiralling curls of his swirling hair.

When Joseph passed through the market
of beauty, his entire capital
went for seventeen gold coins, but
the precious life I squandered suffering
for my love could not buy a single day
of joyous togetherness.

The skirts of his blandishment were never
stained by the blood of the dear ones
he trampled underfoot. Many have lost
their lives to the sword of punishment;
how happy the head
that goes under the blade of his largesse!

The writ of destiny went thus:
The soul will be lost in love.
And in short, it went as it was writ.

As my soul watched how his regal phantom
wreaked slaughter, it picked up its shroud
and marched under his banner with its sword.

Remembering him tonight Khusrau's night
lingered long and grew no shorter
though a moon rose large and sank.

5 Ghazal 153: *gul imshab ākhir-i shab mast bar khāst*

Drunk tonight the rose arose near dawn
and bedecked the banquet with a goblet tulip-red.

Over here the grass sat rooted to the spot.

The cypress stood attentive there on the right.
The breeze was blowing,
and the drowsy narcissus
went stumbling up and down all over.

In the garden, I was lying with a friend,
by God, like a moon without wax or wane.
A cry rose from my heart without my wanting
when she wanted to get up from Khusrau's side.

6 Ghazal 155: *man u shab zindagānī-yi man in ast*

The night and I—this is my life.
Sorrow and the heart—this is my joy.

I drink heart's blood all night
in her memory. This is my pale pink wine.

At night I bewail the insomnia
of absence. This is my cordial song.

I and dark nights in grief's corner—
this is where I secretly rejoice.

Her phantom closes my eyes to myself,
for this is my soulmate at night.

She shouldn't be distressed by my distress.
This is just what I suspected from my heart.

Sometimes I die for her love, sometimes
I live again—this is how my life goes.

Permit me to die at your feet,
for this is my eternal life.

Khusrau costs you no more than to say,
'This is the slave I got for free.'

7 Ghazal 249: *asarī namānd bāqī az man andar ārzūyat*

Yearning for you, no trace of me remains.
What shall I do, for no one gets his fill
of gazing upon your beautiful cheek.
All day in your street, all night at your door,
I have no goal but to look at your face.
I will now circumambulate your street
with just my eyes, for my legs are worn down
to the knees in searching for you.

By faith, will you accept that tracking down
your fidelity, I fed my blood-soaked
heart to the dogs on your street? My mind,
my reason, my senses, heart and eyes too
are devoid of any image but the image
of your face. No, I cannot rightly render
service to you short of yielding
my sweet life in yearning for you.

Which garden do you come from that your scent

is so sweet, my Rose? Your breeze enlarges
the soul, and the dead heart is brought to life.
Though you load my body, weak as a hair,
with a universe of woe, I'll not trade
a single strand of your hair for both worlds.
What need to explain to you how I am,
now that Khusrau has become a legend
in yearning and searching for you?

8 *Ghazal 257: muflisī az pādshā'ī khushtar ast*

Poverty is more pleasant than majesty;
depravity, more pleasant than piety.
Majesty has its headaches, and when
last I looked, beggary was more pleasant.
Since kings let no one approach them,
being indigent among the poor
is more pleasant.

When pride gets into someone's head,
being pals with a dog from the streets
is more pleasant.

When the heart breaks with melancholy
over some beauty, that breaking is more pleasant
than any salve. Public love play with idols
is more pleasant than all this devout hypocrisy.
Once won, there's no pleasure in love.
Separation, for those who play this game,
is more pleasant.

Put your base love out of your mind,
Khusrau. Love for the sacred secret
is more pleasant.

9 *Ghazal 286: bīdār shaw dilā ki jahān jā-yi khvāb nīst*

Wake up, my heart! This world's no place to sleep.
Among these ruins, it's not proper to sit
safe and secure.

Why ask the drowsy sleepers what it's like,
that sweet sleep for which there is no answer?
In the grave, no friend feigns faithfulness.
Only in the ruins beneath the dust
can the weary dwell content.

Since the drunk do not know time's tyrannies,
nothing's better for the sober than wine
and a simple meal.

It's wrong to ask life's savour from heaven,
a piddling cup that holds no proper hope.
Sāqī, send round to Khusrau a drop
from the goblet of love,
for there is no headier wine than that.

10 *Ghazal 288: mast-i turā bi-hīch may-ī ihtiyāj nīst*

One drunk on you needs
no wine. No doctor
has the cure for my pain.

Moon, don't rise before my eyes,
for with his face
I have no need for you at all.

Don't tell me tales of Jamshī's crown.
The dust at the door of the Magian temple
is no less than a diadem.

How long will you petition the friend
with your needs? He is aware.
There's no need for such impertinence.

The coin of the heart not stamped
with unity is counterfeit
with no currency in any land.

The kingdom of the heart was plundered
by the beauties' tyranny. Be gone, heart,
for there's no tax on ruined villages.

Khusrau, none of the insightful have seen
your like among people, which is nothing
but an attribute of their squinting eyes.

11 *Ghazal 313: gar bāgh pur shukūfa vu gulzar khurram ast*

What does it profit if roses rejoice
and the garden is in full bloom?
Our heart is sorrow-bound.
Like the breeze at dawn
we rustled through the world and found
that joyful hearts are scarce
in this realm of living sadness.
Torrents of grief are the only rain
to fall from the hard, azure sky.
How miserable to dwell
beneath this turquoise dome.

Wherever he lives around the world,
heart's blood is the only wine
a poor man drinks.
People regard the ethical with low contempt
while the ignorant see themselves
as the ultimate in rectitude.
How can one look to heaven for joy
when it too wanders bewildered, clad
in funereal indigo?
The spawn of the age
show loyalty to no man.
Pity anyone who's not part of the crowd.

A cup of dregs
from the bottom of the barrel
is in truth more pleasant

than a goblet drunk
in the palace of kings.
Go, Khusrau,
and find a corner
of contentment in which to dwell.
Drink wine, and never turn
from a friend
in whom you can trust.

12 *Ghazal 379: khum tuhī gasht u hanūz-am jān az may sīrāb nīst*

The vat is empty,
and my heart is still not sated with wine.
If finer vintages are exhausted,
O heart of mine,
your blood has been kept in reserve.
The clanking of Majnūn's chains is organ
music for lovers, a music
the prudent don't have the ear to taste.

Wheeling fates,
don't bother. I have enemies
enough to love me: no need for the butcher
where the executioner stands ready.
Tell the king, 'Make his blood run!'
Tell the authorities, 'Off with his head!'
To abandon the beloved for the sake
of one's life is no part of the lovers' creed.

Look out.
If you have any sense, beware!
Take no pity on me: madness
is the best thing to pack for this path.
If the beloved's beauty is not in sight,
its phantom can still make me happy.
In poor homes, moonlight makes the best candle.

Homicidal hunter!
Infidel!
Be gentle a while.
The helpless gazelle cannot contend
with barbarian arrows. Why does that heart,
no longer mine,
circle around you so? Are no
impatient arrows left in your quiver?
Sometimes in my dreams, you said
you would show me your face.
Tell it to a stranger.
One who knows you never sleeps.

Heart,
you will die thirsty.
Turn away from that dimple.
If you dig any deeper in that well,
blood will come to the surface:
No water to be had there.

Khusrau,

first tie on the infidel's sash,
then bow down in adoration.
That eyebrow is a temple for idols:
No prayer niche to be found there.

13 *Ghazal 417: marā bāz az tarīq-i sāqī-yi khud yād mīāyad*

When my *sāqī* brings the cup, it stirs up
memories again, and again old sorrows
visit my joyless heart. Misfortune comes
on one side to offer congratulations,
and on the other his absence looms,
sword poised to kill: Burn,
wounded lover! He comes cold and
loveless. Poor nightingale, wail!
The hunter is on his way.

Before him, I can't choke back my sad moans:
the dog starts howling when it sees a thief.

Sleep, be gone! You're no friend of mine tonight
as I remember that someone's tangled hair.
The wind wracks me with his scent:
stop it for once there on the porch
and board up the window when it blows
from that direction. When he's absent,
his scent wafts from wild marjoram
and won't let me forget how his hair curls.

He left and reduced me to ruins. Muslims, help!
Spiteful he saps my foundations again.

I love you so much
I am overcome with jealousy
if you treat someone else
as badly as you treated me.

Don't listen, my dear. The legend of Khusrau
will sear your heart, for it carries
the scent of Farhād's anguished heart.

14 *Ghazal 467: chi khush subhī damīd imshab az rū-yi yār-i khud*

What a fine dawn broke tonight
from my lover's face! This early spring
refreshed the garden of my life.
Praise God! Fortune's field bore fruit,
and nothing my eyes rained down
upon my days has gone to waste.

Was separation the Judgement Day?
So it seems to me. When it came to an end,
I saw the door of paradise open
upon her exquisite face, and now
that I know nothing of my countless pains,
I can give my friends no account
of my one-time sorrows. My heart and soul,
how they agonized over me

during our separation. Now I show
them her face and I put them both to shame.

I rubbed my eyes all night against
my lover's feet; for once my eyes
were soothed, though surely her feet ached.

What luck it is, what good fortune
when an unfortunate like me
gazes on a sweetheart like you!
I am amazed by what I've done.
You bestowed two kisses on me,
and I swooned with the very first.
Let's start again, for I've lost count.

I go now, but from time to time
you will stub your toe on me,
because of all the dust I leave
as a memorial in your street.

What you declaim so publicly,
Khusrau, is a dream. Where did you doze off
to see things like this around you?

15 *Ghazal* 490: *man banda-yi ān rūy ki dīdan naguzārand*

I am enslaved by that face
no one's allowed to see,
driven mad by ringlets
no one's allowed to touch.
A thirsty flame licks my breast,
and displayed in the distance
a refreshing drink
no one's allowed to taste.

Whether I look at him or not,
I don't have long to live.
Is this any time, my friend,
not to be allowed to look?
Hearts and eyes by the hundreds
await your arrows. So unfair—
is it only hapless me
they're not allowed to strike?

Lord, what tortured agony
this captive bird must feel!
They won't approve its sacrifice
and it's not allowed to fly.
Let me hear a single word,
and I'll give up my soul.
Am I to die frustrated
and not allowed to hear?

My breast was flayed, my heart
was ripped to shreds. Why won't
these complacent fools allow me
to tear off these tattered clothes?
Today the breeze picked up
the smell of my heart and spleen.

Careful, be sure it's not
allowed to blow his way.

Khusrau was pierced again and again
by cruel thorns of separation.
Will he ever be allowed
to pluck a rose from your cheek?

16 *Ghazal 694: khabaram shud-ast k-imshab sar-i yār khvāhī āmad*

I heard the news that you will come
to see your friend tonight.
I offer my head, a sacrifice
to the road down which you ride.

I am about to breathe my last.
Come, so I may live.
What good will it do for you
to come once I am no more?

I can endure, I know, the grief
and sadness of your absence,
if you come, like good fortune,
into my embrace one day.

Like two dice, your eyes have won
my heart and soul, and if you come
to gamble, both worlds by rights
are now yours to win.

A heart and a sigh—your path
into my heart—are all I have left.
Walk this path carefully
so you won't come back a casualty.

Cover your face,
or you will come to be numbered
an eighth star of the Pleiades
upon the astronomers' charts.

People's blood is your wine,
and you drink it without cease.
Don't drink from this goblet,
or you'll come tomorrow hung-over.

All the gazelles of the desert
have lowered their heads to the ground
hoping that you will come
back to the hunt one day.

Coming once, you carried off a hundred
like Khusrau, heart and soul.
Come like this two or three times,
and who will survive?

17 *Ghazal 857: afsūs az in hayāt ki bar bad mīravad*

Alas for this life
that passes with the wind

and for these habits of ours
that do not follow
the path of justice.
Because I run with demons,
an angel cries out
for me each moment in heaven.
Where will this battered heart
build a place to dwell?
My torrent sweeps away the foundations.

The ascetic busies himself giving advice,
and the mind of the poor drunk pursues
joyless playthings. When hung-over, I make
a hundred resolutions to repent;
all are forgotten when the cup-bearer comes.

But I am slave to the fortune of God's good servant
who lives free from servitude to foul ego.

Don't waste those brief days of life
that pass with the wind
in laughter and play like the rose.

O ego, take heed,
the star is turning.
O bird, be aware,
the hunter is on the move.
Step softly
on the surface of the earth
for you tread on the pretty faces of the fairy-born.

Can the blow of Khusrau's words affect you?
No, not when talk runs to Farhād's axe.

18 *Ghazal* 866: *'ishqat khabar az 'ālam-i bīhūshī āvarad*

Love for you brings news of a world
beyond consciousness
and brings the pious
to drink down goblets of wine.
Your cheek broke the repentant vows
of dozens of ascetic devotees
and nearly had them wearing black.
Yearning for you
is the sheriff
who seizes Sultan Reason by the hair
and hauls him before the herald.

To die by your sword—
is this a goal for which one can strive?
One already dead isn't inclined
to strive quite so high.

'A drink,' I implored, 'from those lips
for a madman's sake.'
'This is an elixir,'
he replied, 'that induces unconsciousness.'
Remembering a certain someone,
I grew weak. Doctor, a prescription please

to bring on forgetfulness.

Khusrau,

if a fairy spell
does not control your mind, cover your eyes
from the spell that spells catatonia.

19 *Ghazal 870: dil raft u ārzūyat az dil namīshavad*

My heart left me, but longing
for you won't leave my heart.
My heart broke apart, but pain
for you won't diminish.

The moon at night
rises opposite your face,
but the day will never come
when the moon can oppose it.
My face is pallid gold, and I grind it
with the dust at your door,
but to bond with you
is unattainable alchemy.
At your hands, my tears are a sash
hung over heaven's shoulders,
but my hands cannot hang
draped around your neck.

I sit in sorrow:
though my soul departs,
my heart cannot
rise up and leave.

My heart is a sad way station,
but no caravan can reach it bringing
patience or escape the brigands of absence.
Khusrau fell into the whirling abyss
of longing. The ship of his desire
will not make shore.

20 *Ghazal 917: bahār bī rukh-i gulrang-i tu chi kār āyad*

What use is spring without your rose-coloured cheek?
Your coming to me once comes out better
than a dozen springs. Were the plodding rose
to mount a zephyr and ride off at a gallop,
you would still leave it behind in a cloud of dust.

The image of your face abandons my eyes
so it won't prick its feet on my eyelashes'
sharp thorns. Your bewitching eyes have left me
as thin as a strand of your hair, the single
strand they need to cast their magic spells.

He moves like a rider coming from the hunt
with a clutch of prey
hanging from the stirrups of his curls.

A heavy burden is the grief I bear for you,

but since I bear it for you, were it to weigh
a thousand times more, my heart wouldn't grow heavy.
You are the heart's desire, but when will poor
Khusrau come to embrace his desire?

21 *Ghazal 918: labālab ār qadah k-az gulū furūd āyad*

Bring a brimming goblet that slides
down the throat, and this yearning
perhaps will drain from my heart.

Don't speak of repentance
or say that wine should slip my mind.
May my mind never slough off the jug!

What, repent of wine?
If its taste is made known,
angels will descend to its scent like flies.

I am in death's bonds today. *Sāqī*,
let wine flow through her head
and flush her moonlike face.

The ascetic tablet of my litanies and prayers:
the shard of a jug
down which the wine-script dribbles.

Any bead of sweat that drips
from a beautiful face is a disaster,
a flood to carry off people's hearts.

With the way we drink our own blood
at your door, how can you choke down
a single drop of wine?

Happy are the times when I think
of you day and night, and my life's blood
splashes here and there from my eyes.

Open your veil and shut
your lovers' mouths. Khusrau
may be sinking fast from their talk.

22 *Ghazal 1002: bidān dīlfarībī ki gītī namāyad*

The wise ought not to set their hearts
on the seductiveness the world displays.

Why fall in love with the phantasms
of this world? The mirror shows
the face to be a borrowed thing.

Don't think the knots on your brow
are firm and strong. Fate takes note
of them only to untie them.

How vainly you say, 'I will stand firm.'
If life itself won't stand firm, how will you?

Living, a person resembles form and sense.

Through form one tends to the sense.

My heart is in ruins
and people have hearts of stone.
One shouldn't rebuild
this edifice with such blocks.

Humankind is chaff.
How can it cling to gold?
Straw is naturally drawn to amber.

You'll get no provisions
from worthless companions:
the camel is mated, but no foal is born.

When you speak bitterly, the answer will be the same.
If you curse an enemy, he won't reply sweetly.

Seeking insight from the immature is like a fool
rubbing his head against unfired brick.

If you ask me truly
about the story of this world,
it's an easy lie
that Khusrau sings.

23 *Ghazal 1007: du chashm-at ki tīr-i balā mīzanad*

Your two eyes
let fly a barrage of troubles.
Why do they fire such arrows?
They hit bullseye in my soul
though the bow is drawn
aimed at someone else.
Agile tricksters
your eyes have it:
they aim over there
and strike right here.

Your sable hair
slinks up and robs
black night from behind.

Your proud walk
makes the dove's bouncy trot
look like a crow's lopsided hobble.

The nightingale
strikes up a lay in the key of love
waylays poor me and strikes me dumb.

Don't leave Khusrau
shamefaced
out in the cold.
It's bad enough
that sorrow inflames
this troubled soul.

24 *Ghazal 1012: az ashk-i man bi-kūyat juz surkh gul narūyad*

Only a red rose grows
 where my tears fall in your lane.
Someone will die
 from that rose
 that breathes your scent.

Where a rain of kisses
 falls from your lips,
the heart sprouts bud
 upon bud, and the soul bears
 fruit in bunches.

My eyes drank in my tears
 and flooded with such blood
they inflict bloodshed
 on themselves when no one
 is in pursuit.

I'd die for him, yet when he
 works himself into a rage,
everyone else is in on the story,
 but he doesn't say
 a word to me.

In his breast Khusrau
 bears such lonely sorrow
every hair
 on his body
 rightly weeps.

25 Ghazal 1034: *yārān ki būda-and namīdānam kujā shudand*

I do not know where they went, those
who once were friends. What day was it,
O Lord, when they abandoned us?
If spring comes and asks after them,
tell the zephyr, 'All those flowers
are turned to grass,' and ask the flower
when it pokes out from the earth
how those faces look that now are gone
deep beneath the dust of death.

Gaze upon those leaders now,
once the crown on creation's head
all turned to dirt stuck to our feet.
Those motes of dust that disappear
like all things into thin air once
were suns that set below the earth.
Deceived by the world's enchantments,
they laid all their treasures aside
and went in pursuit of alchemy.

The wares of time are playthings,
childish distractions. The captives
of its charms have no sense at all.
No surprise if they did not get
the cash they craved: Fate's treasurers
themselves are bankrupt, flat broke.
Khusrau, flee. In a faithless world,

expect no trust from a people
as untrue as the world itself.

26 *Ghazal 1037: biyār bāda-yi raushan ki subh rūy namūd*

Bring bright wine,
for dawn has shown its face.
At a moment like this,
there's no being without wine.

Wine is here in my heart
right next to my abstinence.
Where is the cup to rinse
this besotted abstinence away?

If you don't pour it quick,
my heart might burn up.
Flames of passion pulled me
under a Tigris of wine.

So deep in debt to her image,
so indigent, where can I live?
Absence is touchier than
a disgruntled landlord.

Doctor, don't waste
your treatments here.
Your medications are no cure
for the wound of love.

Wise counsel won't bring me back.
Love's crushing grip
wrested the reins of peace
and patience from my hands.

If myriad cruelties rain down
from the azure heavens,
don't imagine that even one is like
the absence of the friend.

May your love be refused
to a nobody like me.
Wormwood shouldn't be ground
in a mortar of gold.

The friend's face, so soothing
to the hell of my heart,
is the tale of the garden of Abraham
in the midst of Nimrod's fire.

If you envy the aromatic
incense of my love,
come see the ashes
where once you saw aloe wood.

At evening prayer each night,
the world grows dark
with the smoke that rises
from Khusrau's heart.

27 Ghazal 1124: *dil zi tan burdī u dar jānī hanūz*

You took the life from my body
and still you dwell in my soul.
You inflicted such pain, yet still

you are the cure. You cleft my breast
for everyone to see,
yet still you lurk there hidden.

With ire's sword you laid waste
the kingdom of the heart, yet still
you rule, sultan among the ruins.

You've set your price at the value
of both worlds. Raise it higher,
for this price is still too low.

Let, O Lord, no man's blood sully
your robes, though you wallow in it
still with no regrets. Like an infidel,

you've wreaked tyranny for years,
yet, for mercy's sake,
you still disgrace the faith.

Like salt, I dissolved with tears,
yet your smile remains
as sweet as sugar still.

My soul is freed from the bonds
of its hovel, yet my heart languishes
still captive in your curling locks.

Old age and the worship of young
beauties sort together ill. How long yet,
Khusrau, will you be unsettled still?

28 Ghazal 1148: *duzdāna dar āmad az daram dīshab*

Stealthily, he came through my door last night,
hair like a thief's lasso slung over his shoulders.
I stumbled to my feet, lost my footing,
and fell faint when he sat down.
Gazing on his beauty, I was stunned
and laid waste, swooning and drunk.
His bewitching, half-intoxicated eyes:
gazelle fawn in a rabbit sleep.

Whoever sees you for just one day
forgets the kingdom of this world and the next.
Without you, nectar turns to nettles,
and nettles turn to nectar in your hand.
Put a ring in Khusrau's ear.
He is your slave and heeds your call.

29 Ghazal 1151: *gar na man dīvāna gashtam z-īn dil-i bad-nām-i khvīsh*

Why would I entrust my message

to birds and breezes if my infamous
heart had not driven me insane?

When evening falls, my heart catches
fire in solitude. I light a fine candle
each night in my Canaan. I awake

with a start. How long will I chain
the feet of my restless soul with dreaming
fancies of your coiling curls?

Since my fate is not to love you,
I keep patient by writing your name
in heart's blood next to mine.

A swarm of pestilent winds blow
towards you from mortals' sighs.
Hide your face!
Mercy on your rose-coloured cheek!

Who is Khusrau that you tire your lips
to torment him? Please, don't squander
your insults like this just anywhere.

30 *Ghazal 1155: mast u lāyaqil guzashtam az dar-i maykhāna dūsh*

I passed through the tavern door last night drunk
out of my mind. Before the old vintner
I saw a pilgrim seated. He had left the world
by choice and everything in it behind.
Here and there musicians lay unconscious,
the harp at rest from its twanging, the lute's lament
mum. The banquet taper stood yellow and thin
and trembling; a pleasing flame ran round its head
pleased to burn.

I was about to pass through the door
when suddenly from within, the pilgrim's eye lit
on me, and he started to rail: 'Where have you been?
How long will you wander aimless, you dullard?
Pass beyond yourself. Bring our libation.
Have a glass. Drink with us now down to the dregs
in the Magian temple. Take this advice
and you will attain whatever you wish.'

These tales are not for you, Khusrau. Go!
Don't get so hot and bothered.
You have no fire like this.

31 *Ghazal 1186: qabā vu pīrahan-i ū ki mīrasad tanash*

When her robe and her shift touch her skin,
I'm envious of her robe,
and her robe, of her shift. She winks,

and people die, but does she grieve
the death of so many thousands
like me? Strange, one can get no sense

of the stamp of her mind,
but can see her spirit move
through the thin gauze of her body.

I feed off it, a parasite,
the way you tie people up in your curls.
Bring a rope and throw it around my throat.

I crumble to dust on her street.
I have only one regret, that this dust
contaminated with sorrow

might reach her on the wind.
Her lover, her pilgrim, dies a martyr
to love. He is blessed, and his shroud
becomes a regal robe. To be joined
with her is no more than this: the lover
is killed and plunged into her tangling hair.

You didn't understand, Khusrau,
what your tongue asked of you. It was a hint
to take a sword and cut off its head.

32 *Ghazal* 1361: *bakht bar gasht zi man ta tu biraftī zi baram*

Luck turned on me when you left my side.
When will you turn like my luck and walk
back through my door? I thought I might

tell someone what my heart goes through.
Before I knew it, news of me
was known around the world.

Once I did not take a single breath
without you. Now see what befalls
me in your absence. I turned my life

to a shield against the arrows
of separation, so everyone might know
I have turned my life over to you.

Without the rose of your face,
my heart contracts like a bud,
and I fear when it blooms, my shirt will burst.

One day I said, 'Your stature resembles
the cypress.' A disgraceful faux pas:
I do not dare to look so high.

I search again for my heart's blood,
and I am certain that though I save
my heart from you, it will not save

my life. If you let me come to you,
I will give up the world. How can
I enter your street and leave all

this behind? As long as the phantom
of your fair visage is in sight, it displays
the kingdom of both worlds for me to see.

With patience, Khusrau, one can behave

with moderation, but I fear
I get worse with each passing day.

33 *Ghazal 1374: ay rukhat chun māh u az mah bīsh ham*

Your cheek is like the moon, and yet
more moon than moon. You tortured
my heart and left behind a wound, too.

Your wink mows the other beauties down
lined up in a row. If it's not too much trouble,
mow down my poor heart, too.

You cast a shadow on my joy,
darkened my heart's day, and eclipsed
the age of far-sighted reason, too.

'Kill me if you won't comfort me,'
I said to you. You're too lazy
to be bothered, and much too blasé.

So, I killed myself: my weapon of choice,
your cruelty. I made it all so
easy for you, and for myself, too.

My patience goes missing and leaves
me behind. It won't look back now
out of fear or peek too far ahead.

Let me tie on the infidel sash,
abandon these idols, and give up
praying and, God forbid, religion, too.

Though he brings on the apocalypse
in my very soul, may he live until
the end of days and a little longer, too.

You always tell me, 'My elixir
is sweet.' If you ask Khusrau, darling,
he'll tell you that it's poison, too.

34 *Ghazal 1400: tā dāman az basāt-i jahān dar kashīda-īm*

Since we've pulled our skirts back
from the spread of worldly wares,
we've rolled up our clothes
and moved to Mendicant Alley.

Sāqī, pour out the wine
from the flask, for we have
drunk too many tears
of blood from sky-blue bottles.

Since the cup of black-and-white dice
that roll across the earth's green baize
is loaded full of trickery,
we have quaffed dark-red wine.

Now it's poverty and the myriad
meanings it contains like threads

that we've woven into a blanket
and pulled down over our head.

We've pulled back the skirts
of ambition from all the world
yields since it could never fill
the pockets of greed.

Smash the assayer's touchstone
against a rock. Gold is just
yellow clay when we have
it weighed in wisdom's scales.

Khusrau, we are not children
to seek out shiny yellows and reds.
Like adults, we've pulled back
our hearts from gold and pearls.

35 *Ghazal* 1424: *bi-raft 'umr u bi-sū-yi khudāy rūy nakardam*

My life is over, and I did not turn to the Lord.
I did not seek out those moments
of rapture, and now the chance has slipped.

How can my heart wash away its filthy corruption?
Unlike my tears, my ablutions failed to flood me with regret.

My tears did not wash away my black disgrace.
My face did not shine bright in the ranks of true men.

What do I know of the path
of these lion-hearted, nocturnal wanderers
when I haven't spent a night or two
even roaming the alleys with dogs?

Never a ball nestled in the crook
of love's polo stick, my head
could not be struck by
the ecstasy of my Sultan's presence.

My rheumy nose could not make out the smell of musk,
too congested to catch the perfume of creation.

They advise me to give up my bad habits, but how can
I now when I did not make a habit of it from the first?

I threw away my whole life on lies:
I never bowed down sincerely before the Lord.

Poetry became my plague.
Alas that Khusrau never said, 'Silence,'
and I did not stop talking.

36 *Ghazal* 1453: *hama shab az tu bi-dīvār-i khāna gham mīgūyam*

All night I tell the walls of the house
my grief for you. I tell fairy tales
but speak with tears in my eyes.
Like a rosebud of blood congealed,
my jealous heart refused to tell

your story to the morning breeze.
Surely, you'll be pleased I'm sad,
but when will I have a good chance
to tell you of my grief for you?

Happy night!
You will sleep softly, and I will tell
your tangled curls of what I need.
In the silence of my heart, I'll say,
'He's mine.' Even if it's not so,
I'll lie all the same.

You've given me advice enough.
Leave me alone. Be satisfied I speak
so seldom of my pain. Everyone
asks for the story of my weary soul:
I tell the tale of the wilted daffodil.

Don't summon me piously to turn
to Mecca in prayer. Consider it just
that you say, 'He is God,'
and I speak of idols.
Don't trouble yourself
over Khusrau's simple lament.
It's not a song that he will sing
to any elaborate melody.

37 *Ghazal* 1513: *vasīyat mīkunam gar bi-shnavad abrū-kamān-i man*

I will draw up my will, if he'll listen
with eyebrows arched, so after I die,
marks from his arrows will show on my bones.

He speaks in the Turkish tongue, but I
don't know Turkish. How sweet it would be
if I had his tongue in my mouth!
I gave thanks for the lineage
of those soul-nursing, ruby lips.
If I made a mistake, pull my tongue out
from the back of my head.

If you'll talk to me out of compassion,
speak up. I am the bewildered Farhād,
and you are my sweet-tongued Shīrīn.

My body burns with love beneath my shirt
so much that my glowing bones show through.
Fulfil the heartlorn Khusrau's desire.
Sit here awhile, so you will feel sorry
for all my moaning and wailing.

38 *Ghazal* 1560: *chashm-rā dar mulk-i khūbī shahna-yi bīdād kun*

Make your eyes the corrupt sheriff of beauty's realm.
Make your bloodthirsty glance the master sorcerer.

Hand over your tresses to the east wind to muss.
Make a thriving household with every strand of them.

Draw your sword of wiliness. Behead all the lovers
and then establish the path of love play anew.

You're drunk on youthfulness and groggy with beauty.
Remember sometime those who lie awake at night.

Although I do my best to suppress my moaning,
'Too tight, can't catch a breath,' my chest warns me,
'Cry out.'

I chained my heart to your locks. If it's not fit
for slavery, free it. Shake out the dust on your head.

My longing for your face destroyed me. For God's sake,
reveal your face and make happy a weary heart.

Order my persecution or give me justice.
I am not one of those who will turn against you.

I heard a new coin was struck in beauty's realm.
East Wind! First pay homage, then offer it blessings.

My breast is the mountain at hand. I excavate
it with my fingernails. My name was once Khusrau.
After this, make it Farhād.

39 *Ghazal* 1583: *ay dil 'alam bi-mulk-i qanā'at buland kun*

Heart, raise your flag
in the land of contentedness.
At the table of the contemptible, keep the eyes
of appetite unscarred. Your being is dust,
and you want it to turn to gold:
utilize the alchemy of its nothingness.

In the privacy of satisfaction, take the day
as it comes from God.
Chain Satan in fetters of religious law.

If one day you find someone fired by hardship,
make your soul rue seed on his inner flame.

Howl like a trapped beast
at one who has no discipline.
Laugh with contempt
at one who has no good works.

Go through the street of reason
to the door of the Sultan of Love.
Then throw this crown from your head
as a shoe for his horse.

How long a crow atop the trash heap?
Be a regal osprey awhile.
Ennoble yourself by not showing yourself.
First drag your soul along the footsteps
of the night wanderers of love.
Then lasso your aspiration
over the fortress tower of heaven.

If the enemy kicks you because
you aim low, become the dust on his path

so you aim higher.
If they pelt you with stones, pray for them twice.
If they lord it over you, double your humility.

This threshold is some person's kingdom,
but it belongs to another. Go, Khusrau,
be pleased with no one person.

40 *Ghazal 1675: khūn giryam archi az sitam-i bīkarān-i tu*

Though I weep blood
over your boundless cruelty,
with my eyelashes I still sweep
the dust from your doorstep.

You have broken many hearts of glass,
a crime that has turned
your unkind heart to stone.

No fulfilment with you,
no delight for me.
Soul bereft
I don't belong to you or to myself.

All night till dawn,
your brutality
roamed through my heart.
'Ah, now you are in my heart,'
I thought.
'In your soul,'
was the reply.

Don't frown. In those creases
on your brow, I see foreshadowed the bow
that will destroy a world.

Who will rescue me
from your tightly pursed mouth,
when my purse is shrunk
tighter than your lips?

You said, 'Khusrau is mine.'
What good fortune this is—
I mean, just for my name
to have crossed your lips.

41 *Ghazal 1758: ay firāq-i tu yār-i dīrīna*

Your absence: my old friend
Sorrow for you: my old consolation
Pain you caused: my everyday guest
Scars you left: my old souvenirs

The thorns, the old thorns
keep piercing my heart
and I drown in blood.
Everyone has wine and friends,
but I am still benumbed
by an old besottedness.

I'll never tell in public
the hardship
of my old expectations.

I will turn to earth, alas,
with my old dusty heart.
East wind, remind him
now and then
of his old lover.

Now and then
won't you saunter past
your old friend's grave?

Let my soul
be relieved a while
of its old cares and concerns.

Ah, if you would come back
and take from Khusrau's heart
its old complacency.

42 *Ghazal 1772: shahrī-st ma 'mūr u dar u az har tarafmah-pāra-ī*

There is a prosperous and populous city
where fragments of moon gleam at every turn.
Each fragment holds a shard of my shattered heart.

Examine everyone's appearance closely.
Among these shapes, there is a bloodthirsty
archer, aiming to slay me with his bolts.
Anyone wishing to vie with him in beauty
and allure must have cheeks of rose petals
and a cypress's lithe grace. Others worship
the pale moon of his face as if it were
the sun, but no such celestial orb
rises to rule my fateful horoscope.

Love for you has tunnelled its way deep
into the cavity of my chest where
my wounded heart sleeps like an infant
in the cradle.

When he promises union,
he covers his face and hides himself away.
What can Khusrau do but give his soul
to whoever happens to be looking on?

43 *Ghazal 1797: mast āmada-ī bāz bi-mihmān-i ki būdī*

You've come back drunk.
Whose guest were you?
I know you're sugar. Whose cane field were you in?

My absent friend,
whose sad heart did you seek out?
My lost Joseph, whose prison were you in?
My madman,

past whose street did you walk?
Whose fluster did you pique?

Where did you drink wine last night?
Whom did you give the goblet to?
Whose fountain of youth were you
in the darkness of the night?

Primped and drunk,
in whose arms did you sleep?
Who was so lucky?
Whose orders did you obey?

Who picked through your curls?
Who bit your lips?
Who did you sit with at night?
Whose guest were you?

(O heart,
the sweets are all plundered.
What have you done?
At whose table were you the fly?)

In whose moaning body were you another soul?
On whose searing soul did you pour the salt?

You don't have the scent of roses, Khusrau,
or the colour of spring.
In whose garden did you go to stroll?

44 *Ghazal* 1815: *bar lab asar-i sharāb dārī*

On your lips you have traces of wine,
in your glance, a fancy for sleep.
At night you sleep, and I cry for help.
Don't you know how you sleep?

The down on your cheeks shows
its pure musk before it breaks the skin.
Caught in that dark growth
you keep below the surface,
Khizr will drown
in the water of life,
and though you keep it in a sunny place,
your soft down
retains its fresh moistness.

You bring the lips,
and I'll bring the heart:
now you have both wine and kebab.
Make merry!
Spill my blood,
and if anyone asks,
you have dozens of answers
on each eyelash.

'I'll sacrifice you with a glance,'
you said. If you're in a hurry,
bismillah and get on with it.
No point to useless torment,

if your slave Khusrau is to be killed.

45 *Ghazal* 1825: *ay chihra-yi zībā-yi tu rashk-i butān-i Azarī*

How lovely your face,
the envy of ancient idols.
Describe you as I might,
your beauty is lovelier yet.
Never is an image seen
finer than your visage.
Are you the sun?
The moon? I do not know.
A fairy? An angel?
I do not know.

I've wandered the horizons,
worshipped before icons.
Many a beauty have I seen,
but you are something different.
Your body is a cypress
in motion, peace
and comfort for my soul.
As you leave, don't trail
your skirts and drag
this comfort in your wake.

You set out for the meadow
thinking to take in the view
and carry off my heart and soul
following the lover's rule.
The whole world is your plunder,
people gaze at you in wonder.
Your eyes, enchanting narcissi,
practise the ways of blasphemy.

Khusrau is a beggar, a stranger,
a wanderer in your city.
For God's sake, take pity
and look on us in exile.

46 *Ghazal* 1836: *sabza nau-khīz ast u bārān dur-fishān āyad hamī*

Green is newly sprouted
and rain comes scattering pearls
and the heart comes
to incline to fields
and flowing waters.
The clouds raining jewels:
you'd fancy they come
from the seashore,
caravans loaded with pearls.
It's a place for the heart
to blossom like the rose
with joy, for today
the scent of that youth
comes on the east breeze.

Elegantly
tossing his curls in every direction
he walks by, and
a million hearts come
trailing in his wake.
If my soul survives
forever
it's no surprise
for the water of life comes
flowing down soul-streams
from your lips.

I don't know how sleep
comes to your eyes
when such cries for help
come from your street all night.
May the rose bower
of your beauty grow fresher
each moment, for why else does
Khusrau begin
early each morning
to sing and lament
like the nightingale?

47 *Ghazal 1850: bakhtam az khvāb dar āmad chu tu bā man khuftī*

My fortunes woke when you slept with me.
You did not sleep in my embrace
but in my shining eyes. Restlessly
you flit about, yet in the sleepless eyes
of your friend, you slept like a friend
to strike our enemies blind.

One night,
you'll recall, we were both in the garden:
me in the brambles and thorns,
you sleeping amidst flowers and roses.

A cause to celebrate! Khusrau
perceived you so fully that you slept
all night with him, arms around his neck.

48 *Ghazal 1915: bi-khūbī hamchu mah-i tābanda bāshī*

Dwelling in a ravishing realm,
you shine in beauty like the moon.
When I was destitute,
you put me out of my misery
with a glance. Long may you live—
O God!—for acting so nobly.

If you sit next to me, your slave,
I am free of the world's sorrow.
The world burns caught in your gaze.
Sweetness pours from your smile.

Don't be cruel. Avoid the shame
of facing your lovers on Judgement Day.

You have wrecked so many households,
teasing, reckless, flirting,
just as you have wrecked Khusrau

49 *Ghazal* 1968: *man ashk-i bīdilān-rā khanda mīpandāshtam rūZī*

Heartbroken tears—there was a day
I thought them a laugh. The seed I once
planted is now bearing fruit.
From the first day her black hair swept
before my eyes, my heart throbbed—
one day my morning will turn to night.

Don't make a pretense of sobriety,
if you never drank from the goblet of love.
There was a day I fancied myself sober.

Having surrendered both my eyes to her,
I'll set foot on her street, as if one day
I might fill these holes with dust from her door.
My heart melted from the old pain.
Consider the privation of my fate
as I looked clandestinely through my tears
at her door that day. If your heart is where
it belongs, if mine is not, don't taunt me:
My heart was once like yours.

Treat burnt-out Khusrau with contempt.
It's all fair payback, since he once maligned
those whom people treat with contempt.

Other Poems



MISCELLANEOUS PERSIAN POEMS

50 *Praise for Nizāmuddīn Auliya*

These are two stanzas of a multi-stanza poem in the tarkīb-band form in praise of his pīr.

You are the friend to sorrowful hearts.
Imagination and intellect are lost in you.
Stars and heavens are in motion
in astonishment at your deeds.
The path to you is long, and on it
two worlds are like halves of a dust particle.
Many foolish men have boasted
about the vision of this dangerous path.
There—where perfection is without need,
a cloud came and covered up the chaff.
Make me turn away from the world
to reach your presence without fear.
Since the character of your slaves is pure
wouldn't it be proper to call you pure?
Khusrau is prostrate before the *pīrs*,
and you are the absolute limit of his affairs.

In your goblet is love's elixir.
Time and again the Friend's message comes to you.
In the space between your footsteps,
one enters the unfolding union of both worlds.
You have codified the path of Farīd
and that's why they call you the Code, the Nizām.
A hundred noble souls in heaven
have been melted down and stamped with your name.
Your court is the *qibla* and angels
fly to your roof like doves.
The tonic of your words soothes
the melancholia of those yearning for the Real.
The lowly Khusrau will have eternal life
now that he is enslaved by you for a thousand lives.

51 *On Music and Poetry*

Once a minstrel said to Khusrau, 'Storehouse of verse,
which is nobler: the science of music or the art of poetry?
Music is a science that cannot be precisely noted
but poetry is an art that can be put on pen and paper.'

Khusrau answered, 'I am an expert in both fields,
so it is proper that I be the judge in this matter.
I composed three books of poetry—
that, in fact, are three books of music.
I will describe the difference truly
for one who is a judge of such things.

Imagine poetry to be a complete science,
it needs no notes nor a minstrel's voice.
A poem sung low or high makes no difference
to its meaning or to its words.

But if a minstrel utters random words as song,
without lyrics they have no sense or meaning.
Take the flute player who has his own voice and the flute,
but he still needs someone else for the lyrics.
Thus, both one with a voice and the listener
are in need of a master of words.

Music thus requires both voice and melody,
poetry needs a only a connoisseur of words.
Poetry is the bride and song her ornament, but
is there any harm if a beautiful bride has none?
One who knows this I consider to be human, if not
he should ask me, but if he doesn't he is an ass.'

52 *The Fine Lads of Delhi*

This ghazal is from the poet's larger narrative poem (masnavī), Qirān al-sa'dain (The Conjunction of Two Auspicious Stars), which includes praises of Delhi's buildings and inhabitants.

Delhi and its fine lads
with their turbans and twisted beards
openly drinking lovers' blood
while secretly sipping wine.

Wilful and full of airs
they pay no heed to anyone.

So close to the heart, they rob
your soul and tuck it safely away.

When they are out for a stroll
rose bushes bloom in the street.

When the breeze strikes them from behind,
see how the turbans topple from their heads.

When they walk, the lovers follow,
blood gushing from their eyes.

Their heads puffed up with beauty's pride,
their admirers' hearts are gone with the wind.

These cheeky, simple Indian lads have made
Muslims into worshippers of the sun.

Those fair Hindu boys
have led me to drunken ruin.
Trapped in the coils of their curly locks

Khusrau is a dog on a leash.

53 *Exchange between Two Lovers: Khusrau and Farhād*

This selection is from the long narrative poem, Shīrīn and Khusrau. Rivals for the affections of the fair Shīrīn, Khusrau and Farhād embody two kinds of lovers. The form of a verse dialogue (munāzara) between two characters was often used effectively by Nizāmī.

Morning arose from long sweet slumber
clutching a goblet of milk in her hand.
Her distant movement roused heaven
and the goblet's sweetness spilled over.

King Khusrau said, 'My fortune seems bright;
I will go to visit the river of milk today.'

He removed his kingly garments
and emerged in a shepherd's guise.
Making inquiries through dale and hill,
he came alone to the river of milk.
He gazed for a while on the bank of the stream
and saw all the rocks piled up in a heap.
He looked carefully at each cut
with an expert eye and called out, 'Bravo'.

When he saw the master craftsmanship,
he set off towards the master, designing a scheme.

He saw a young man built like a mountain
with kingly royal splendour about him.
That noble form was lost in thought,
like a full moon reduced to a crescent.
He had experienced such countless torments
that you could count his bones through his skin.

With a bloody face and dusty head to foot,
coated with dust and blood, he was sorrow itself.

Khusrau asked him,
'Who are you? What are you making?'
Farhād replied,

'I am a lover. I am smelting my soul.'

'What is the mark of a lover?'

'He knows to live and suffer.'

'What do such lovers really want?'

'To give their hearts and seek out pain.'

'Why are their hearts not with them?'

'Do the beautiful beloveds allow this?'

'What is the beloved's creed?'

'They call it coquetry and deceit.'

'What is her other occupation?'

'To take life and give sorrow.'

'Does sorrow's bitterness ever decrease?'

'It is sweeter than sorrow, so it's fine.'

'How do you fare with this distance from her?'

'I am dying away so far from her face.'

'Does her radiance sometimes fall on you?'

'Yes, but from afar, like the moon.'

‘Don’t look at her as long as you live.’
‘Death would be better than that life.’
‘She will put your life in danger.’
‘My life is cheap, I have no fear.’
‘Keep your distance from that friend.’
‘That is not friendship’s way.’
‘She is untried and nothing but trouble.’
‘How does that pertain to love?’
‘How long will you suffer for her?’
‘All my life and in death as well too.’
‘And if you die from this passion?’
‘I will pray for her in annihilation.’
‘And if she should chop off your head?’
‘It will look towards her from beneath the earth.’
‘And if she were to spill your blood?’
‘I will die longing for her.’
‘Isn’t bloodshed a heinous crime?’
‘It is lawful when shed by the friend.’
‘If she were to suddenly pass before you?’
‘My eyes would sweep the way before her.’
‘If she lays her foot on your eyes?’
‘There’s room in my eyes and heart.’
‘If you see her form in a dream?’
‘I will not wake up until Judgement Day.’
‘Do you ever dream of this?’
‘Indeed, if ever I manage to sleep.’
‘If she asks you to dig through stone with your nails?’
‘I would even use my eyelashes for miles.’
‘Live long in your sorrow for your friend.’
‘How can I live when she is my life?’
‘Love has put your life in danger.’
‘What have lovers to fear from this?’

Whatever the great monarch said to him,
Farhād answered him back as a lover should.

The king was impressed by the passion
and perseverance in such a true and tried lover.

54 *Don't Be Heedless of My Sorry State*

This poem in mixed Persian and Hindavi is not found in the standard collections of Khusrau's Persian poetry, but has been attributed to him in oral and vernacular traditions.

Don't be heedless of my sorry state,
He rolls his eyes, he makes excuses.
 For I cannot bear this separation.
Why won't he take me in his arms?

Nights of separation are as long as tresses,
 And the days of union as short as life.
Girl, if I don't see my lover,
how will I get through the dark night?

In a flash, two enchanting eyes seduced
 my heart and robbed me of my peace of mind.
Who cares for me enough
to take my message to my love?

Blazing like a candle, flitting like a mote of dust,
 continually weeping in love for that beauty.
Sleepless eyes, restless limbs
he doesn't come, he doesn't send word.

In hopes for the day of union
 with my trickster lover, Khusrau,
I will keep myself prepared,
ready to go to his abode.

55 *The Goldsmith*

I lost my senses when I saw the goldsmith.
 The lad caught me by the ear and enslaved me.
 I went to complain about my aching ear,
 but he put his lips on mine and silenced me.

56 *The Pān-seller*

Last night my *pān*-seller was up to his tricks
 as he slowly prepared *pān* leaves in his shop.
 As he gave the people in his shop their leaves,
 in return they surrendered to him their lives.

57 *The Jogi*

The young *jogī* boy was sitting in the dust,
 face pretty as Lailā's, mind mad as Majnūn's.
 His beauty was really enhanced by the dust:
 a mirror is brighter when polished with grit.

58 *The Elephant Driver*

Seated on an elephant, *kajak* in hand,
his chain-like tresses shattered all hearts.
Seldom has anyone anywhere seen such a rare sight:
The sun high in the sky, with crescent in hand.

59 *The Flower-seller*

The rose prefers no other beauty to yours.
That's why it always laughs at everyone else.
My Hindu flower-seller, cover your face.
It's your fault the rose seems to wear a sacred thread.¹

60 *The Cobbler*

Cobbler, don't ask me for my heart and my faith.
Don't make the full moon wane before your beauty.
Your awl stitches my shoe and sews up my soul.
My life seems to end—stop repairing these shoes!

61 *The Curd-seller*

Gujrī, you shine bright in your charm and beauty,
that curd pot on your head, a royal parasol.
Sweet sugar seems to trickle from your two lips
whenever you shout, 'Curds for sale, buy my curds.'

62 *The Barber Boy*

The graceful barber boy
was a mirror of beauty.
I said, 'Darling, embrace me.'
He cried, '*Nāi, nāi*,' a barber-ous no.²

63 *The Hindu Idol*

I grew pale before the Hindu idol.
Alas, he had no idea of my distress.
I told him, 'I want to kiss your lips.'
He laughed and said, '*Nahi nahi*,' a proscriptive no.³

64 *The Hindu Lass*

One day I was strolling by a stream
when I saw a Hindu lass on the bank.
I asked, 'My pretty, how much for your hair?'
She cried, 'A pearl for every strand,'
or '*Get lost, you wretch*' in the Hindavi sense.

65 *Come Colour Me in Your Own Hue*

Colourful, come colour me in your own hue.

You are my lord, Beloved of God.
My veil and my lover's turban,
colour them both with spring.

You are my lord, Beloved of God.
As the price you demand for the pigment,
accept the payment of my flowering youth.

You are my lord, Beloved of God.
I have arrived at your threshold,
protect my honour.

You are my lord, Beloved of God.
Nizāmuḍḍīn Auliya is my *pīr*;
be my companion in love.

You are my lord, Beloved of God.

66 *Nizām, I Am Ready to Die for You*

Nizām, I am ready to die for you.

Ready to die, Nizām—let me be sacrificed.
Among all the women,
my veil is besmirched,
everyone sneers.
This spring, dye my veil.
My honour is in your hands.

Nizām, I am ready to die for you.
Others fight with their in-laws,
but I have you—this everyone knows.
My honour is in your hands.

Nizām, I am ready to die for you.
Qutb and Farīd come in the wedding party
and Khusrau is the bride.⁴

Nizām, I am ready to die for you.

67 *Mother, Today There Is Colour*

Mother, today there is colour
in my beloved's home:
colour in his courtyard,
a happy meeting with my lover.

Mother, there is colour.
I found a *pīr*, Nizāmuḍḍīn Auliya—
Whenever I look he is with me.

Mother, there is colour.

Nizāmuddīn Auliā, he brightens the world.
He is with me whenever I look.
Mother, there is colour.

68 *The Path to the Well Is Very Rough*

The path to the well is very rough—
how can I fill my pitcher,
my fine beloved Nizām?
Tell me, beloved Nizām.
When I went to fill my pitcher with water
he ran up and broke it.
Nizāmuddīn Auliā, I am ready to die for you.
Save the honour of my veil.

69 *When Our Eyes Met*

I dressed myself up to go see my lover,
but when I saw him, I forgot myself.
You robbed me of everything
when our eyes met.

You made me drink love's elixir
and I got drunk
when our eyes met.

I was left staring—
you made me an ascetic
when our eyes met.

Fair arms and green bangles
you caught my wrist
when our eyes met.

You became the charming lover—
you left me breathless
when our eyes met.

Khusrau dies for Nizām—
you made me a married woman
when our eyes met.

70 *The Mustard Blooms in All the Forests*

The mustard blooms in all the forests.
The *tesu* blooms in my courtyard.
The koels call out from the branches,
and the beauty gets dressed up.

The gardener women come with pots.
The mustard blooms in all the forests.
Planting all kinds of flowers,
they came with their pots
to the door of Nizāmuddīn.

The lover said he would come,
but years have already passed.

The mustard blooms in all the forests.

71 *Why Did You Send Me So Far Away?*

Why did you send me,
my dearest father,
so far away as a bride?

I am your caged bird,
father,
that flies off when day dawns.

I am your meek cow,
father,
and will go where I am driven.

When my palanquin passed
below the neem,
my brother was stricken.

A palace or two
for my brothers, for me
this place of exile.

My mother- and sister-in-law taunt me,
‘Your father
didn’t even give you a comb.’

When I lifted the curtain
of the palanquin,
I saw a foreign land.

Thus says Amīr Khusrau,
father.
May my marriage last for ages.

72 *Wedding Night*

Khusrau, I spent my wedding night
awake with my beloved.
My body was mine,
my mind was my beloved’s,
until they blended into one colour.

73 *Beauty Sleeps on the Bed*

Khusrau is said to have uttered these verses when he heard of the death of his pīr Nizāmuddīn Auliya.

Beauty sleeps on the bed,
her hair across her face.
Come Khusrau, let’s go home,
night has set over this place.

74 *He Visits My Town Once a Year*

He visits my town once a year.
He fills my mouth with kisses and nectar.
I spend all my money on him.
Who, girl, your man?
No, a mango.

75 He Stays Up All Night Alone with Me

He stays up all night alone with me
and only leaves at the crack of dawn.
His departure breaks my heart.
Who, girl, your man?
No, an oil lamp.

76 He Always Strikes in the Dead of Night

He always strikes in the dead of night,
taking ornaments from my body
until the sun comes up in the sky.
Who, girl, your man?
No, friend, a thief.

77 Leaping and Bounding He Arrived

Leaping and bounding he arrived
and devoured all that was veiled;
in an instant, he forced his way in.
Who, girl, your man?
No, friend, a monkey.

78 When He Enters My Bedroom Buzzing

When he enters my bedroom buzzing,
he approaches and wakes me up,
as if whispering the mantra of parting.
Who, girl, your man?
No, friend, a mosquito.

79 *The Romance of Duval Rānī and Khizr Khān*

This is a prose summary with occasional verses of the long masnavī.

Princess Duval Rānī of Gujarat is peerless among the beautiful peacocks of India. Her name in Hindi was ‘Devaldei’, but I changed it to ‘Duval’ because *duval* is the plural of *daulat* and all fortunes were gathered in her. Like the story of ‘Lailā–Majnūn’, I will call this work ‘Duval Rānī—Khizr Khān’.

Raja Karan ruled Gujarat from his capital city, Anhilwara. But Sultan ‘Alāuddīn Khaljī, in his third regnal year, sent his brother Ulugh Khān on a campaign to annex the land of Gujarat. Raja Karan escaped the onslaught and sought refuge with Raja Rāmdeo of Deogir. A different fate, however, was in store for his family. Raja Karan’s wife Rānī Kamlādei was taken to Delhi as a captive for the harem of the sultan along with a large booty. Once when the sultan was in a good mood the rānī informed him that she had a daughter, Devaldei, back in Gujarat who would be a suitable consort for his young son, the prince Khizr Khān. The sultan gave his blessings for the union and the wedding preparations were begun. Meanwhile, animosity erupted again between Delhi and Gujarat, and during a second attack on the province by the sultan’s forces, Raja Karan again sought refuge at Deogir, but this time he had to agree to give Devaldei in marriage to Bhilamdeo, Raja Rāmdeo’s son, in return for protection. But as the wedding procession was on its way to Deogir, Devaldei was captured by the sultan’s forces and sent to Delhi, where she was reunited with her mother.

According to the sultan’s wishes a marriage was agreed upon between the eight-year-old Devaldei and ten-year-old Khizr Khān. The queen, Malika Jahān, summoned the young prince and informed him about this arrangement. Talking of such matters in front of his mother embarrassed the young prince, and he left the room, but love had taken root inside him. Duval Rānī was happy too because the prince resembled her brother whom she had left behind in Gujarat and missed so much.

The love, heart’s light, between the two
increased daily like the new moon.
Their game was love. Not a moment
were they apart, free from this sport.
Zulaikhā had a treat in front of her,
but was not sated with her Yūsuf.
And his mood became like someone’s
drinking from Khizr’s limpid spring.

The sultan continued to receive all the reports of their dalliance, but one day, suddenly, both he and the queen decided that his maternal cousin, Alp Khān’s daughter, would be a more suitable bride for the prince. They sent a proposal to the queen’s brother, who duly accepted, and his beautiful daughter was made ready for the union. Upon hearing this all the women of the palace were saddened and tried to prevail upon Malika Jahān to relent because Duval Rānī had become the repose of the prince’s heart. The queen was moved by these pleas and summoned the young couple before the king. But does cruel fate allow two people to be together? Both went back to their own quarters. After a week the moonlike Duval Rānī came before Khizr Khān.

Khizr Khān glanced at her from afar,
stolen sighs escaping from his heart.
Duval Rānī cast glances back at him
and a spark flared into life between them.
They entered into each other's being
and neither body nor soul could hold them.

This is the course of love:

How sweet it is for two souls
to be smitten in the prime of youth.
Now to reveal the secret with one's brows,
now to begin to scold with one's lashes.
To summon the lover with the corner of the eye
and to send him away with an air of disdain.
For one to give life, the other to snatch it,
for one to speak cruelly, the other to be mute.
For one to shed tears of blood all alone,
for the other to laugh in secrecy.
For one to tear his breast in longing,
for the other to see this but not give in.
For one to tell his griefs to a confidant,
for the other to kiss the rival's feet.
Playfulness on one side, sorrow on the other;
weeping on one side, and laughter on the other.
Love found a place in the heart
even as wisdom fled to the desert.

The two lovers continued to meet and their bodies and souls were sated with each other's sight. The prince had four helpers in their scheme: three maids, who were constantly in his service, and a slave who was his confidant. Duval Rānī also had four confidantes: three maids and a harem eunuch. How true is the adage that every sorrow must have a confidant.

But when Malika Jahān discovered the secret of the two lovers she was resolved to separate them. She commanded that the young moonlike princess should be secreted off to the Red Palace. As preparations for this were being made the queen had second thoughts about her decision and kept the young princess in her own palace. However, someone had already reported the earlier turn of events to Khizr Khān who fainted upon hearing that his beloved was to be sent away. Wood or stone or even metal feels pain when it is separated from its source. Everyone watched the terrible state of the prince as he rent his clothes and shed tears. A friend counselled him to control his grief for otherwise it would affect everyone in the kingdom. Soon the prince learned of Duval Rānī's whereabouts and realized that all was not lost. He took comfort and secretly gave a nightingale a message for his beloved: 'You are innocent and haven't picked flowers from the garden of the world. Fate never lets two lovers be united, so it is better that we enjoy a few moments happily as friends. Come to me for our separation has been too long. Send a reply for hope is my companion.' When she received the message she could not contain her joy and was restless. In reply she said to a confidante: 'Kiss the ground before him in servitude and tell him that when the heavens sift through the fine ambergris night, the prince should come to me like the moon.' The prince was ecstatic at this reply and was beside himself on the day of their meeting. Under a mountain of misery, he lived with a stone inside his constricted heart, but a madman doesn't feel that stone—for many miles separate him from

forbearance.

The night had bathed the world in the splendour of the sunlike moon. The stars were like new brides clad in silk and engaged in love-play while the world rested in sweet slumber. By chance Malika Jahān had been summoned by the king that night. Duval Rānī's confidantes were worried that if the queen had found out about the meeting she would have turned against the princess in favour of her niece. The prince was resolved on his assignation and was impatient to see his beloved. On her side the princess was nervous but bravely put a bolster in her bed and covered it with a sheet and stationed a maid to look out for the queen. In the meantime the moon and stars had disappeared behind a cloud and it began to rain and lightning struck nearby. The two lovers met and the fragrance of union was like the scent of flowers.

The soul was unprepared for patience.
The tongue could not utter a single word.
The two stood like newly grown cypresses
and fixed their gazes upon each other.
In that glance two eyes became four,
with one set of pupils giving light to the other.
Two planets joined in one conjunction;
two pearls in a jewel box, separate yet together;
two young peacocks, together with wings clipped;
two rose bushes in one garden
rejoicing in each other's scent;
two sweet-smelling candles at night,
burning in each other's heat—
the two lovers face-to-face joined glances,
joined hearts, but kept bodies apart.
But as love's bewilderment grew stronger
the curbs on lust were trampled underfoot.

Even as their feelings became more ardent and lion-like in ferocity, the prince realized that this was not the right thing to do. Thoughts of honour saved the day. A perfect friendship is the basis for a firm relationship, for a man does not remember his moments of lust—inquire about Shīrīn in Khusrau's assembly; ask Farhād about his suffering. After two watches of the night had passed, the confidantes urged Duval Rānī to return to the palace. The two lovers parted in deep sorrow. Khizr was like Alexander and returned thirsty for the water of life. But although they separated, they were together in their hearts.

One evening, when Khizr Khān was depressed, he took a stroll in a beautiful garden filled with the best flowers of both Khurasan and India and he was reminded of his love. He addressed a flower:

O flower, I wish I were a plant,
just like you, in a garden,
for you have access there and I don't—
a flower is allowed in but a tree is not.
That flower is swathed in a hundred veils,
while I must be content with distant fragrance.
Since you are there day and night,
you will be able to deliver my message.
Give greetings from an absent me,
a *salaam* stained with my heart's blood.
And if my sweetheart accepts it,
sing this *ghazal* on my behalf.

Soon after, spies reported to Malika Jahān about the state of affairs between the lovers, and this time she was determined to take care of the situation once and for all. Duval Rānī was ordered to be sent away in confinement to the Red Palace. The prince was at his studies when the news reached him.

He threw his Yūsuf-like form in the dust,
for Zulaikhā's love he tore open his shirt.
He left his books and writing behind, threw
the pen from his hand and shoes from his feet.
He sprang up barefoot and bareheaded
and ran from school in heedless agitation.

He rushed to the side of his departing beloved, and both shed many tears. Out of grief he shaved his head and gave her a lock of hair telling her that he had become as thin as a hair and she should always think of him. In return she gave him her ring and told him that when he kissed its gemstone he should think of her lips. Tearfully they parted from each other.

The wedding of Khizr Khān and Alp Khān's daughter took place with great pomp, and Delhi was decorated like a bride for the festive event. Many musicians and dancers displayed their talents at the celebrations and the entire city was filled with mirth.

All were joyful but Khizr Khān dwelled on grief;
his body was there but his heart somewhere else.

He stayed away from his bride, thinking about his beloved and reading the story of Lailā and Majnūn. He lost interest in parties and hunting, and weeping sorrowfully, he would kiss the ring she had given him. On her side she was restless night and day, longing to see him, and rubbed the lock of his hair against her eyes.

One should learn fidelity from a fish:
away from water it's sure to perish.
When one must burn in love, does it matter
whether the beloved is near or far?
Since the lamp gets its oil from the soul
it burns with it and without it dies out.
Normally, friendship brings satisfaction,
but when love comes sweetness is separation.
One recognizes a friend's worth at a distance,
but on a full stomach honey tastes like vinegar.
To make plans for union
is not love—it's just lust.

In the meantime, a friend secretly told Duval Rānī that Khizr Khān had accepted his bride. As if she hadn't suffered enough, this news was devastating for her. She thought to herself, 'Is it right that he is drinking wine while I shed tears? If he is a prince, I too have royal virtues. If he has a golden parasol higher than the moon, I have a black halo around my head. Give back the heart you took away; undo the knot you tied.' She then sent him a letter of reproach, just as the legendary 'Azrā did to Vāmiq. She declared:

O faithful and cruel friend—
cruel to me and faithful to another.
You are happy in your celebration,

I grieve in a secluded corner.
You are in a garden with roses,
I am shackled within foul walls.
There you shoot your bow on a hunt
but here the arrow pricks my breast.
Your heart and sweetheart—how are they?
If I am no longer in your heart, how is she?
Although I am but a slave in your palace,
don't demean me in this lowly way.

Khizr Khān replied to her, addressing every one of her accusations, and described his own abject condition. Even though he had a companion in his bed, he was not drinking pure wine but the dregs. He told her not to taunt him with his kingship for he was a slave before her. However, no lover can match the passion of a Hindu woman who burns herself for her lover. Only her companions knew how Duval Rānī suffered in her prison. She spent the dark nights sobbing until the blood of her tears became henna for her hands. She sent a petition to the sultan, who was known for his justice to his subjects, pleading for succour in the matter. Falling into slumber after praying for help, she saw Khizr Khān in a dream and he told her that she would be reunited with him. This revived her spirits and gave her much hope.

But the lover was also pining away for his beloved, sleepless at night and frustrated.

One who breaks free from love's fetters
is deserted by wisdom in his affairs.
The brand of love is a strange one,
since the searing of the soul seems gentle.
All the suffering for the sake of love
was born from the heart and also killed by it.

Abandoning his regal pride Khizr Khān supplicated heaven in prayer, invoking the honour of true lovers like Farhād and Majnūn. A voice from the unseen world told him that his suffering was soon to end and he would be with his beloved. He was ecstatic and sent for some minstrels as a diversion. They sang *ghazals* for him as he anticipated the happy outcome of his love.

One wins something when the time is right—don't think that with extra effort things can speed up. Khizr Khān sent a friend to plead his case before his mother Malika Jahān, arguing that she shouldn't let her bias for her niece override her son's desire; besides, men—and especially kings—can have more than one wife. Malika Jahān finally relented and Duval Rānī was recalled from the Red Palace. The two were married in a discreet wedding ceremony and their patience was finally rewarded. For the wedding night she looked so ravishing and beautiful that words cannot describe the sight.

With her eyes she broke the hearts of Turkestan,
with her hair she bought up all of Hindustan.

If a Khurasani pheasant is fine, an Indian peacock has no peer. One who is endowed with beauty by God needs no ornament on her body. As Khizr Khān gazed upon Duval, the garments were torn from her soul. He clung to her like a hunting falcon to its prey and embraced her cypress form like a rose petal in a tight bud. The diamond tip was ready to drill into the pearl, a challenging task, for the pearl was not pierced, but the tool was hard. The jeweller was ardent in his job and poured pearls into the

red gem-casket. It was as if Khizr sated himself in the dark waters. When their passion abated they dallied and cherished each other. The lovemaking continued all night until morning, and the two lovers remained in each other's arms in a drunken passion.

Khizr Khān did not forget to give thanks for the grace he had received, and in the morning offered his prayers. He joined the ranks of the followers of the spiritual master of the age, Nizāmuddīn Auliya.

Since love was his essence from head to toe,
he became the favourite of pious mystics.
Love was manifest in his temperament,
which was a guide on the bridge of truth.
As with Yūsuf, love and beauty came together;
in one body he was both beloved and lover.

In his devotion to the master he purified his life and gave up earthly pleasures.

As time passed, the hand of fate changed circumstances again, for in one instant it can turn a hundred kings to dervishes. If there is respect for love in one's heart, then honour is no better than disgrace. As it turned out, Sultan 'Alāuddīn Khaljī became seriously ill and there was no cure for his fever. Khizr Khān, the sapling of that garden, vowed that if his father's condition improved he would visit all the Sufi shrines on foot. Miraculously, the sultan became better and the prince cheerfully set off to Hastinapur on his pilgrimage. But he had made a major oversight: he had neglected to receive the blessings of his *pīr* Nizāmuddīn Auliya. Sadly, he had also lapsed in his abstinence and started carousing. Finally, as he was walking, his feet got blisters and he was persuaded to ride the rest of the way when he should have been on foot. The eunuch Malik Kāfūr, who had been waiting for his chance, poisoned the sultan against both Khizr Khān and Alp Khān. The latter was put to death immediately, while the prince was ordered by the sultan to proceed to Amroha and send back the royal insignia. The naïve Khizr Khān was grieved by the king's behaviour but complied obediently. In his detention he cried and summoned minstrels to sing for him, and the sound of the harp matched his mood. He thought to himself that since he was innocent and was his father's favourite, he had nothing to fear; in any case, his tears would intercede for him. Like the wind he took off for the capital and arrived back in Delhi and went before his father. The sultan embraced him and accepted him back into the palace.

The evil Malik Kāfūr was not happy about this reconciliation and further conspired to get the sultan to incarcerate the prince in Gwalior Fort for a month. Even though it grieved the sultan immensely to take this action he believed it was the expedient thing to do. The effect on Khizr Khān was terrible and the people were also upset. One should not blame everything on fate, for humans have a mind and sense too. But a king's command is written on stone and even if the mountain moves he will not waver from his command. Malik Kāfūr, however, was made to agree that no harm would come to the prince. The crafty minister agreed to the terms and led the prince away to his palanquin. In the Gwalior prison Khizr Khān was like a ruby hidden in a stone, but Duval Rānī was by his side to comfort him. Constantly together, they had no other companions and entertained each other with songs and stories.

One should not be happy with the colours and scents of the garden that is the world; for a strong, fierce wind has destroyed many such flowers. Don't be like those weak kings who leave behind the treasure of Shaddād; be a beggar like Khusrau who left behind a good name.

If you want a treasure in the afterlife,
you need a good name in this one—that's all.

At this appointed hour, the sultan died soon after and Khizr Khān's grief increased. Scarcely had the sultan been buried than the seditious Malik Kāfūr took over the reins of the kingdom as regent. He immediately sent the eunuch Malik Sumbul to blind the prince. Although the order had come from an enemy unworthy of the throne, Khizr Khān bore this terrible outcome with fortitude. Ashamed of what he had done, Sumbul nevertheless went back to Delhi where he was rewarded by Kāfūr. But very soon, the ingrate Malik Kāfūr was put to death for his wicked deeds, for there is a pact between salt and the sword.

Khizr Khān's brother, Mubārak Shāh, became the new sultan of Delhi and was ill-disposed towards his brothers. He also sent a message to Khizr Khān demanding Duval Rānī as his slave since he had heard so much about her beauty. Khizr Khān was furious and responded, 'Since fortune has deserted me, Duval Rānī is my only wealth. You want to take even this away from me—you will have to cut off my head first.' This refusal upset the king and he at once dispatched someone to kill Khizr Khān. When the lowly murderer entered the fort of Gwalior the women began to wail loudly. It was as if the day of resurrection had come as a guest in paradise. Like a butcher he began to slaughter all those young lions. First the younger brother Shādī Khān was killed, and then it was Khizr Khān's turn. Even though he bravely tried to defend himself his head was cut off in one blow.

When fate's sword cuts short one's aspirations,
neither the sun nor the moon can intervene.

The celestial gardener had opened the door of paradise and all the *houris* were waiting to greet the martyrs.

For Duval Rānī the water of life had turned into the sword of doom. When Khizr Khān was buried, his soul lingered around his beloved and addressed her:

My soul and the disturber of my soul,
for your sake my life ended, as did my world.
A tree of affection will grow from the earth
wherever my pure body shed blood.
The end of life is not death. Death is
being far from those one loves.
In the grave, I am not Prince Khusrau, but Farhād,
with a mountain of grief over my heart.

Khizr Khān was buried in the Vijay temple in Gwalior Fort as a ruby is hidden in a stone. Duval Rānī was in deep mourning, and it was as if her falling tears of blood became henna on her hands. She twisted the lock of hair that her lover had given her in her hands and wanted to die. She sought his heart in the lock of hair and it became the source of life to her. But since the departed do not return, grief only causes suffering to the body. One should construct an edifice of a pure heart and leave aside earthly materials. If you don't know what is good and bad in every matter, take a lesson from this story and learn the way of love. This tale was written with the blood of lovers and every line of it holds secrets. For Khizr Khān and Duval Rānī were two flowers blooming in one garden, happy like wild roses, not like tulips with brands on their hearts.

Dry rituals won't provide you the water you desire,
to perform godly deeds you must depend on love.

This story is from the masnavī Hasht bihisht (Eight Paradises) that Kāfūrī, the Princess of Khvarazm, tells the Persian king Bahrām Gūr on Friday while they are in the camphor-coloured pavilion.

In Khotan there lived a wise philosopher,
expert in interpreting the secrets of the stars.

It seems that the sky was his board
for the reckoning of mysteries.

One time he discovered the trick
of making lifeless objects speak.

The sage cleverly made a doll
of iron, copper, silver and gold.

It revealed all the secrets of the world
and told him about hidden matters. [5]

He even made a bird that sang,
flying through the air as if alive.

His keen and scientific mind
learned the ways of high heaven.

Once he made a brass-and-copper statue
that laughed at anything that was untrue.

When the machine was ready,
he thoroughly tested its efficacy.

He took it before the king of the land
who praised and took it for his own. [10]

The king too tested it until
he was familiar with its skill.

He rewarded the inventor with a treasure
that none had received ever before.

Then he had the idol brought
to his bedchamber with haste.

When he was finished with his duties
he cast a glance in its direction

and recounted a false story—lo!
right away the statue began to laugh. [15]

Now it was the king's custom
to shun women and marriage.

He had read in books by wise men
that women's wiles had no end.

They're never free of cruelty
and in their hearts there is no fidelity;

before their husbands, like a mirror,
they are cold and hard of heart.

One day feeling the primal urge,
he confided the matter to his vizier. [20]

The experienced man said in answer,
'An unguarded treasure is a blunder.

When a man is intelligent and wise,
why should there be strife with his wife?

As long as the policeman is alert,
robbers cannot tunnel into a fort.

When a lord stumbles drunk through the market
it's wrong to complain of the pickpocket.

You are young and this is part of nature;

There's no avoiding the harem's pleasure. [25]

A man without a wife begets no heir.

There is no pearl without an oyster.

For a king not blessed with any children
it is wrong to leave his kingdom heirless.

It is best that you fulfil your desire
and bring a moon into your chamber.

Don't restrict yourself to one attempt
for a single planting does not bear fruit.

Don't be a king who is less than a rabbit—
the latter is never without three or four mates. [30]

Find a fitting partner for yourself
and try her out as she ought to be.

Above all, do what is best for yourself
and forget about everyone else.'

Taking the matter to heart, the king
went out seeking some fine women.

He searched throughout the town and the country,
gathering reports from all and sundry

about those who were veiled
from the gaze of the rulers of the land. [35]

When he saw signs of what he was looking for
and was duly informed from all sides,

he appointed certain functionaries
known for wisdom and expertise.

Each one would bring to the king
a pearl to make up his string,

offering gold, cloths, gems and perfumes,
all kinds of services and wondrous things.

Then according to his command
everyone hastened to every side, [40]

travelling day and night
to every prince and potentate.

They poked their head under every veil
for her who could be the king's mate.

At last four daughters of fortune

set off for the factory of fate.

The men returned happily satisfied,
having attained their wish manifold.

Upon arrival they went before the king
in order to pay their respects to him. [45]

Ceremoniously they made obeisance
and presented the four brides in palanquins.

The king, pleased with their service,
expressed to them his sincere thanks.

He rewarded each one with gold
and elevated them even more in rank.

Then with riches and blandishment
he sent the ladies off to the harem.

The king had a paradisal palace,
with foundations in heaven itself. [50]

On four sides picturesque edifices
had been built in the proper ways.

On one side in a garden of shady trees
a broad and mighty river flowed.

A staircase came down from the palace
for the king to access the riverside.

There was a path on the second side
at the bottom of which was a gate.

A staircase came down to this door
for the king to go quickly to the stables. [55]

On the third side was a grazing ground
filled with large camels inside and out.

Another staircase came down to this place
for the lion-king to sport with his camels.

On the fourth side was a tavern
filled with *sāqīs* like the moon and the sun.

Well appointed, it was a house
with four chambers for four beauties.

When night was as still as a bride's ornaments
and the roosters rested from their plaints, [60]

the king hastened from his court
and made for slumber's picture gallery.

He ordered his servants
to bring forth the brides.

Those sugar-lipped lovelies arrived,
tossing their ambergris tresses about.

A veil covered their heads,
bejewelled from tip to toe.

All were long-limbed with long tresses,
and their long, proud gait strained their hips. [65]

On their ears were pearl and carnelian,
but their treasure untouched by any man.

Musky tresses framing faces so fair
a hundred hearts caught by every hair.

Their artful and intoxicated eyes
would singe the pious and break their resolve.

Each one was playful but cruel—
a home-wrecker, and set to kill.

When the king saw those bright eyes
he lost his senses and patience. [70]

He summoned each one up to him
and seated them upon the throne.

For a bit he indulged in fun and sport
and succumbed to their magical spells.

Then from among those four Chinese dolls
he picked one to take to his bed.

The others arose and withdrew
to their chambers with all due grace.

When the king saw the rose without a thorn
his hundred-year quest was instantly won. [75]

He was all sugar and sweet smiles
stealing kisses and scattering roses.

He rubbed his finger upon the small apple
and held the juicy pomegranate in his fist.

In the course of fun and games
that stole the garden's fruits and flowers,
with a fragrant flower between his fingers
he stroked the face of that lovely cypress.

Suddenly the delicate lady swooned,
seeing which the king cried out. [80]

Witnessing this farcical scene
the magical figure laughed from afar.

The king recovered some of his wits
and began to ponder the situation.

As he got up to leave her in her faint,
he glanced right and left in confusion.

When he happened to look that way
his eye fell upon that seditious idol.

He saw the brazen image standing,
put together by skilful alchemy. [85]

Hiding under her veil, the beauty
protested that the statue was trespassing.

That cackling contraption of wonder
again opened its mouth in laughter.

Doubt filled the king's heart anew,
as his confusion about the event grew.

Rolling up the secret inside his heart,
he dallied with the damsel until dawn.

Whenever the idol broke into laughter,
the lady's smile would disappear. [90]

The king ordered a tower for her
that was built close by the stables.

That place was properly appointed,
fitting for a young new bride.

Then he ordered the palace guardian
to fetch another cypress to the throne.

In a kingly manner, guided by fate,
he sat on the throne with another bride.

She was a killer, slaying with her airs;
he began to kiss and play with her hair. [95]

Suddenly he took her in his arms
and covered her back with ermine.

When the king rubbed the fur against her skin,
she broke out into a rash of itching.

Irritated by the ermine, she fled
like lightning from a cloud.

She cried, 'My back is covered with bites;
the fur has killed me with its prickliness!'

Once again the artful beauty was all smiles;
the king was beset with a multitude of doubts. [100]

He renewed his intimacy with her,
a fake game played with the faker.

He said, 'Bravo! May this body rejoice
from the fur that was like needles.

Your body is very sensitive—
look at your face in the mirror.'

Following the king's command
she took a mirror and gazed in it.

The king put his face next to hers
so that she would look at him. [105]

When the damsel saw the king's face
she saw another person looking at her.

She hid her face in wonder:
who desired to see one like her?

Her face, which only the mirror was allowed to see,
was not one bit inferior to the moon.

Then the wise doll began to laugh
and the king was plunged into doubt.

He didn't share his suspicions with the beauty;
instead he fulfilled his desire and slept until day. [110]

When the moon donned a sable mantle
and the regal sun was dressed in ermine,

he gestured to the elegant beauty
to go off to her secluded chamber.

He commanded a chamber for her,
located by the path of camel drivers.

That day it chanced that the king
wiled away his time in feasting.

Then he summoned the third damsel
and tenderly seated her before him. [115]

There was a garden in a special landscape,
where nightingales danced around every rose.

A brick pond was in the middle,
eight-sided, like the pool of paradise.

Fish flitted around in it, each one
wearing the earring of servitude.

A boat made of white aloe floated in it,
like the new moon on a dark night.

In the boat several dolls were seated
who looked like hajj travellers at sea. [120]

Jasmine-scented spring was busy
strolling through the garden, enjoying the view.

When the damsel saw the garden and pond
and the wide-eyed, luminous fish,

covering her face with a sleeve
she remarked coyly to the king,

‘With all these fishes,
who will even look at me?

I, who avoid the eyes of women,
how could a man even glance at me?’ [125]

When the contraption heard her words
it burst into laughter at the non-truths.

The king understood what was the matter
but carried the mannequin away from her.

He recovered from the bewitchment
of that fairy-faced Solomon.

He renewed his pleasure with her,
and was full of play and laughter.

The blushing beauty went off again
to view the pond in the garden. [130]

A sudden gust of wind hit the ship
and threw all the dolls into the water.

When she watched them drown
and sink under the water,

such a shiver went through her being
that she fell to the ground in a faint.

At laughter from the magical doll
the king seemed to lose all control.

He sprinkled rosewater on her face
until the beauty opened her eyes. [135]

On the last day of that month,
he had an apartment set up for her,
a path from which led downward
right to the portico above the river.

Then with sweets and sparkling wine
he spent the night in her company.

In heaven when the moon pitched its tent
and the night was veiled within,

the king sat with the fourth damsel
at his service in pleasure's pavilion. [140]

With a host of pretty ornaments
her movements drove him wild.

When she approached the royal throne,
she kissed the ground in adoration.

She stood still in quiet obeisance,
not moving until she was summoned.

She kept her head bowed demurely,
ready to submit to slavery.

She strove to please, unlike the others
who in truth were mere performers. [145]

Until the dark world was again illumined,
she served the king at his bedside.

When dawn took up a rosy goblet,
finishing the dregs of the dark night,

at the king's command, the young woman
went to the tower of the drinking room.

The presence of those beautiful *houris*
made the palace into an octagonal paradise.

The king was cheered in his mind
and properly made a firm resolution: [150]

that at all times from then on—once a month,
each would entertain him for a week by turn.

He enjoyed sleeping with three,
but the fourth made him uneasy.

He said, 'In a precious casket they are pearls
that have been pampered by kingly thrones.

The fourth one is not fit for a throne,
for she has suffered among beggars.

A person raised in comforts
is coddled and coquettish. [155]

Since she had no one to care for her
she is as subservient as a slave.'

In this misjudgement he found peace of mind—
it was like crossing out a correct word.

For three weeks he made merry with three,
and never gave a thought to number four.

One night, drunk and wasted from wine
he was asleep in his bedroom,

next to the fresh spring with sparkling eyes
who on that first day was upset by a flower. [160]

When he awoke he found an empty bed
and the tall cypress not at his side.

He looked to the left and right:
not seeing her, he rose from the bed.

He rushed to every pavilion and corner
but found no sign of her anywhere.

He saw that the door of every building
he went to was locked.

When he reached the staircase door,
he found the lock open and door ajar. [165]

He pulled out a sword from his side
and raced straight down the stairs.

Standing back he glanced inside
to see what was happening there.

He saw a Zangi muleteer all worked up
who angrily brandished his whip

over that so sensitive body;
as he whipped her repeatedly

he roared like a lion over a fawn,
‘Why were you not on time?’ [170]

She said softly, ‘Until the king was asleep
how could I have given him the slip?’

When the king heard the bride’s words
he reddened with fury like a cock’s eye.

In his intelligent mind he recalled
the laughter of the magical doll.

He wanted to rush inside
and knock heads to the ground.

But he thought to himself,
‘If I lop their heads off, [175]

the other beauties will find out—
and I won’t uncover their secret.’

With this plan he turned around
and went back to sleep on his bed.

When freed from his rival’s embrace
she too returned to the royal bed.

The *hour*i escaped from the dark demon
as the world was lit up by the bright sun.

The king removed himself to another room
that was brightened by another moon. [180]

This one sipped wine with her sweet lips
but within them her secrets were sealed.

She waited for night's hour to come
so that she could attain her desire.

When the sun sank into the earth's howdah
the moon rose on the sky's board on high.

The king feigned drunkenness
before his dutiful spouse.

Senseless, he laid his head on a pillow
as sleep padlocked his drowsy eyes. **[185]**

When two watches of the night passed,
the damsel, who was no longer afraid,

rose quickly from the king's side
and raced off like moonlight.

She held the door of carnal sedition,
pushed it open and stepped within.

The camel driver in those stables
sought to penetrate the stall of pearls.

Elated and in anticipation of his prey
he had thrown a camel sackcloth on the floor. **[190]**

When she entered, he leapt up, eager, and
pulling her hair, threw her to the ground.

Violently he forced himself upon her,
upon that sword-like and thorny cover.

Since her back was prickly from the ermine,
she felt as if she was up against a back-scratcher.

The king was in hot pursuit of her,
like a shadow chasing after the sun.

When he saw her delicate body that way,
the hair on his body bristled in fury. **[195]**

Though it was hard to control his jealousy
he did not draw the curtain back wantonly.

Downcast by his spouse's infidelity
he went back and lay on his bed.

She who had abandoned his side
also returned when she was finished.

At dawn when the bright-faced bride
upon the heavens appeared as a friend,

the king escaped from the beauty
and sought intimacy with another. **[200]**

He set off for the riverside tower
and like the moon in Aquarius sat there.

The serving lady of bright face
poured fiery wine into his glass.

The king sat down to a drinking bout
while his enemies ate their hearts out.

Happy is he who on this arid path of life
drinks sweet water from this old waterwheel,

for no one finds water from a pitcher
that is made of turquoise-blue glass. [205]

He feasted late into the night
with the slant-eyed Turkish moon.

Object of desire in his arms, wine in glass—
could there be better fortune than this?

When the beauty filled his goblet
from the pitcher's sparkling stream,

once again before the hypocritical moon,
like the previous night, the king got drunk.

As if senseless he put down his head;
his eyes were closed but vision alert. [210]

When half the night had passed
and everyone was in deep slumber,

the lady arose and went down,
and removed her clothes at the riverbank.

She had gone there earlier in the day,
to hide a clay pitcher in the bushes.

Taking it she turned it upside down
like a flower floating on water.

When she was carried far from the shore,
the king could not control himself any more. [215]

He undressed and dove in,
in hot pursuit of his woman.

When the fair one reached the far shore
she submitted herself to her desire.

A Hindu like a deer-hunting hound
was waiting to pounce on his prey.

Finding his wish fulfilled—he got
such a lovely creature without effort.

He clung to her like a fly to a sweet,
pouncing on her like a dragon. [220]

When the king saw this sight,
grieved, he returned to his castle.

The fairy herself soon left the demon
and turned back to her Solomon.

When the sun like an early rising Sufi,
appeared over light's fortress in the sky,

the king set off to test by comparison
the mettle of the fourth coin.

He went to the fourth sun's abode
and held a feast fit for Jamshid. [225]

Seeing the place in broad daylight
he noticed all the signs of piety.

He was not rejoicing but anxious inside
from the fresh wounds he had received.

In her usual manner, the lady
stood before him submissively ready.

In affection, she displayed signs
of care-giving and companionship.

Like a red rose she remained bright,
until the camphor day grew dark. **[230]**

At night when the sun hid in a corner
and the world was free from all care,
the seal of wisdom was on the king's lips,
unlike all the other nights.

As usual, he got himself drunk
and was inattentive to his friend.

Since he did not have affection for her,
he did not hide his bad feelings from her.

When about half the night had passed
and the beauty had finished her sleep, **[235]**

she woke up and, going to a corner
covered herself as a pearl in a casket.

She removed all her finery and jewels
and put on white-coloured garments.

She bowed her head in supplication
and stood in a pose of obedience.

She cried in the manner of the abject,
and pressed her eyes to the ground.

When the king, observing her stealthily,
saw that she possessed a sound quality, **[240]**

his dark suspicions increased somehow
with respect to how she prayed to God.

He suspected that all this piety
was a mere show and trickery.

He tested her at every chance he got
but found not a single thorn in her path.

He had a good feeling about her character
but didn't reveal his feelings to her.

When he was done with testing the ladies,
he knew each to be what she was. **[245]**

He determined that veiled in secrecy
each should receive her just due.

He told a servant to go off
and fetch an unfired pitcher.

Quietly he hastened to the garden
and replaced the fired with the unfired one.

When the young cypress had the time
to slip off to the riverbank like a stream,

she turned the pitcher on its head
and placed it securely beneath her. **[250]**

She set off, when she was secure,
on the road that led to her lover.

In the middle of the river, she received
her summons from the next world.

Her unfired vehicle disintegrated
as she submitted to the agent of death.

The fair beauty drowned in that river,
so like a rare pearl in the deep sea.

The star of her fate turned dark
as the moon went into Pisces. **[255]**

Who does not have a similar fate,
decreed by the good and evil stars?

He who emerges like lightning
is drowned by proximity to this earthen pitcher.

When the king had taken care of one,
he turned his attention to the other damsels.

With the flower petal who had hurt him
he was severe, like using a stick on a plant.

He whipped her body so
that the petals fell off that jasmine. **[260]**

Her lover the muleteer too
received his fit punishment.

The memory of luxury would torture her
as long as she swept scraps from the stalls.

When restricted to a diet of barley
every moment is a new death.

And the one who was allergic to fur
and had lost her heart to a camel driver—

he thrashed all over with thorns
like a lancet breaking over each hair. **[265]**

The blue welts caused by the sharp thorns
were just like the marks left by needle stings.

He turned her away in disgrace
into the camel driver's embrace,

so that when she collected camel dung
she would recall the scent of ambergris and musk.

Finally, the damsel who was chaste
and not touched by an ounce of lust—

he embraced her with full propriety
and appointed her as his first lady. **[270]**

He made a pact that as long as they lived
no other moon would shine in her heaven.

That virtuous and luminous creature
had so many white garments like camphor

that the king was agreeable in all of this
and became camphor-like just like his mate.

Thereafter, they always dressed in white,
like the pages in the book of their lives.

Footnotes

Other Poems

- [1](#) A reference to the diagonal fold of the rose's outer petal that resembles the Hindu sacred thread that is worn over the shoulder until the waist.
- [2](#) *Nāi* means both 'barber' and 'no.'
- [3](#) *Nahi* means both 'no' and 'prohibiter'.
- [4](#) Qutb and Farīd refer to the Chishti Sufi *pīrs* Qutbuddin Bakhtiyār Kākī and Farīduddīn 'Ganj-i Shikar' who preceded Nizāmuddīn.

Bibliography

PERSIAN WORKS BY AMĪR KHUSRAU USED FOR THE TRANSLATIONS:

- Dībācha-yi Dīvān-i Ghurrat al-kamāl*. Ed. Sayyid Vazīr al-Hasan ‘Abidī. Islamabad, 1975.
Dīvān-i kāmīl-i Amīr Khusrau. Ed. Said Nafisi, Mahmud Darvish. Tehran, 1982.
Duval Rānī Khizr Khān. Ed. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. Delhi, 1988.
Hasht bihisht. Ed. J. Iftikhar. Moscow, 1972.
Khamsa. Tehran, 1983.
Kullīyāt-i ghazalīyāt-i Khusrau. Ed. Iqbal Salahuddin. Lahore, 1972.
Kullīyāt-i qasā’id-i Khusrau. Ed. Iqbal Salahuddin. Lahore, 1977.
Majnūn va Lailā. Ed. T A. Muharramov. Moscow, 1964.
Qirān al-sa’dain. Ed. Ahmad Hasan Qari. Aligarh, 1918.
Shīrīn va Khusrau. Ed. Gh. Aliev. Moscow, 1961.

BOOKS ABOUT AMĪR KHUSRAU:

- Abdurrahman, Sabahuddin. *Amir Khusrau as a Genius*. Delhi: Idārah-i Adabiyāt-i Dillī, 1982.
Ansari, Zoe. Ed. *Life, Times & Works of Amīr Khusrau Dehlavī*. New Delhi: National Amir Khusrau Society, 1975.
Brend, Barbara. *Perspectives of Persian Painting: Illustrations to Amir Khusraw’s Khamsah*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003.
Ernst, Carl. W. and Bruce B. Lawrence. *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
Gabbay, Alyssa. *Islamic Tolerance: Amir Khusraw and Pluralism*. London: Routledge, 2010.
Habib, Mohammad. *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi*. Bombay: Taraporevala Sons and Co., 1927. (Reprint; Lahore, 1979).
Hasan Nizāmī. *Taj ul ma’athir* (The crown of glorious deeds). Tr. Bhagwat Saroop. Delhi: Saud Ahmad Dehlavi, 1998.
Hasan Sijzi. *Nizam Ad-Din Auliya: Morals for the Heart*. Tr. Bruce B. Lawrence. New York: Paulist Press, 1992.
Husain, Mumtaz. *Amir Khusrav Dehlavi*. Karachi: Saad Publications, 1986.
_____. *Amīr Khusrau: hayāt aur shā’irī*. Islamabad: Naishnal Kamītī barā’e Sātsau Sālāh Taqrībāt-i Amīr Khusrau, 1975.
Meraj Ahmed Nizami. *Surūd-e rūhānī: qavvālī ke rang*, Delhi: Ghulam Hasnain, 1998.
Mirza, Mohammad Wahid. *Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*. Lahore: Punjab University Press, 1962. (Reprint; Delhi, 1974).
Nath, R. and Faiyaz Gwaliari. *India as Seen by Amir Khusrau (1318 AD)* Jaipur: Historical Research Documentation Programme, 1981.
Qureshi, Regula Burckhardt. *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context, and Meaning in Qawwali*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

- Seyller, John. *Pearls of the Parrot of India: The Walters Art Museum Khamsa of Amīr Khusraw of Delhi*. Baltimore: Walters Art Museum, 2001.
- Samnani, S. Ghulam. *Amir Khusrau*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1968.
- Sarmadee, Shahab. *Amīr Khusrau's Prose Writings on Music in Rasā'il'ul I'jāz, better known as I'jāz-i Khusrawī*, ed. Prem Lata Sharma and F. 'Nalini' Delvoye. Kolkata: ITC Sangeet Research Academy, 2004.
- Sharma, Sunil. *Amir Khusraw: Poet of Sultans and Sufis*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2005.

Selected Glossary

<i>Abraham</i>	: a prophet who was cast by King Nimrod into a fire which, at God's command, was miraculously transformed into a garden
<i>‘Azrā</i>	: beloved of Vāmiq in the romantic tale by ‘Unsurī
<i>Farhād</i>	: sculptor who is the rival of King Khusrau for the love of Shīrīn
<i>ghāzī</i>	: warrior for the cause of Islam
<i>gujrī</i>	: female member of a tribe that traditionally used to sell dairy products
<i>jogī</i>	: or yogi, refers to an ascetic
<i>kajak</i>	: curved hook used to control elephants
<i>khānaqāh</i>	: Sufi establishment headed by a <i>pīr</i> where mystical gatherings take place
<i>Khizr</i>	: the prophet who led Alexander to the water of life
<i>Khusrau</i>	: ancient king of Iran and legendary rival of Farhād for the love of Shīrīn
<i>Lailā</i>	: beloved of Majnūn in the Arab tale of star-crossed lovers
<i>Majnūn</i>	: the madman-lover of Lailā in the Arab tale of star-crossed lovers
<i>pān</i>	: betel leaf that is stuffed with other ingredients and chewed
<i>pīr</i>	: elder or Sufi master, also known as <i>murshid</i>
<i>qawwālī</i>	: ecstatic performance of Sufi verses in South Asia
<i>qibla</i>	: direction of Mecca towards which Muslims face during prayer
<i>sāqī</i>	: cup-bearer or wine server at royal banquets, usually a young boy, frequently addressed in <i>ghazals</i>
<i>Shīrīn</i>	: beloved and wife of King Khusrau who is also loved by Farhād
<i>Vāmiq</i>	: lover of ‘Azrā in the romantic tale by ‘Unsurī
<i>Yūsuf</i>	: a prophet (Joseph) and object of Zulaikhā's desire
<i>Zulaikhā</i>	: wife of Potiphar whose longing for Yūsuf was transformed into a licit love

Acknowledgements

We have worked closely together in every phase of this project, but as in any collaboration there has been some division of labour. Paul has been primarily responsible for the selection and translation of the *ghazals*, while Sunil took on the Hindi and other Persian poems. We have looked over each other's shoulders throughout the process in countless phone calls and email exchanges, and all the translations have benefited from this incessant, friendly and peaceful collaboration. This introduction began with Sunil's earlier study of Amīr Khusrau's career, but was subject to so many rewrites and revisions that it has ended up a truly co-authored work.

Introductory acknowledgements offer scant thanks to those who have inspired and supported a project this complex and ultimately it is the book itself that must convey the gratitude we feel. But to name a few names:

Paul would first like to thank Sunil for inviting him into this richly rewarding project and ensuring that his flights of English fancy did not fly too far off the course set by Khusrau's Persian. Paul's students and colleagues in the translation studies programme in the Department of Comparative Literature at Indiana University offered endless insights into the delicate negotiations of language and culture that are inherent to translation. Long conversations with Franklin Lewis on the particular problems of moving between medieval Persian and modern English poetics have informed this project in ways too subtle to enumerate. And Paul's wife, Arzetta Hults-Losensky, has patiently endured all the drafts of the translations and provided enthusiastic love and support throughout.

Sunil would like to thank R. Sivapriya and Ambar Sahil Chatterjee at Penguin India for their support of this project; Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye and Yousuf Saeed for their unceasing dedication to Amīr Khusrau's legacy; and the organizers of the Jashn-e-Khusrau in New Delhi, March 2010, where some of the translations were first presented.



THE BEGINNING

Let the conversation begin ...

Follow the Penguin [Twitter.com@PenguinIndia](https://twitter.com/PenguinIndia)

Keep up-to-date with all our stories [YouTube.com/PenguinIndia](https://www.youtube.com/PenguinIndia)

Like 'Penguin Books' on facebook.com/PenguinIndia

Find out more about the author and
discover more stories like this at penguinbooksindia.com

PENGUIN BOOKS

Published by the Penguin Group

Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi 110 017, India

Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, USA

Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto, Ontario, M4P 2Y3, Canada (a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.)

Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

Penguin Ireland, 25 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd)

Penguin Group (Australia), 707 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3008, Australia (a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty Ltd)

Penguin Group (NZ), 67 Apollo Drive, Rosedale, Auckland 0632, New Zealand (a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd)

Penguin Group (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, Block D, Rosebank Office Park, 181 Jan Smuts Avenue, Parktown North, Johannesburg 2193, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

First published by Penguin Books India 2011

www.penguinbooksindia.com

Translation copyright © Paul E. Losensky and Sunil Sharma 2011

Cover: illustration of a detail from a fifteenth-century folio of Amīr Khusrau by Christian Montenegro

All rights reserved

ISBN: 978-0-143-42079-8

This digital edition published in 2013.

e-ISBN: 978-8-184-75522-0

Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)
[Contents](#)
[About the Author](#)
[Praise for the Book](#)
[Dedication](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Ghazals](#)
[Other Poems](#)
[Footnotes: Other Poems](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[Selected Glossary](#)
[Acknowledgements](#)
[Follow Penguin](#)
[Copyright](#)

